A BEAUTIFUL FIEND

BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH

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A Beautiful Fiend

A Novel

By

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

AUTHOR OF

"A Leap in the Dark," "The Lost Lady of Lone,"
"Nearest and Dearest," "Her Mother's Secret," Etc.

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A BEAUTIFUL FIEND

CHAPTER I

VICTOR

"VICTOR HARTMAN! Stand up. Look upon the jury."

The speaker was the clerk of arraigns.

The scene was the crowded courtroom of the City Hall.

The one addressed was the prisoner at the bar—a dark, slim boy of about twenty years of age. He arose to his feet, and stood grasping the front rails of the dock, while he turned his pallid face, and wild, dark eyes toward the twelve men who held his life upon their lips.

The clerk spoke again:

"Gentlemen of the jury, look upon the prisoner."

A dozen of as conscientious citizens as ever hung human being for horse stealing fixed their eyes upon the poor creature whose doom they were about to decide.

"Gentlemen of the jury, how say you? Do you find Victor Hartman, the prisoner at the bar, guilty or not guilty of the wilful murder of Henry Lytton?"

There was a pause, in which nothing could be heard in the deathly stillness of the crowd but the quick, low gasp of the agonized criminal as, in the crisis of his fate, he clutched the railings before him.

"We find him guilty," solemnly replied the foreman of the jury, in tones that were distinctly heard throughout the breathless assembly.

And all eyes were bent upon the doomed boy to see

how he would receive these words. But only those who were nearest to him could detect the quiver of his bloodless lips as he quickly covered his face with his hands and sank back upon his seat.

There was a moment's silence still, and then a low murmur of approbation ran through the crowd. For this one's crime had been the most heinous on record, and had been abundantly proved upon him. And public sentiment had demanded his conviction, and now rejoiced in it.

But the prisoner shrank a little at this demonstration.

And then the voice of the crier was heard, commanding order to be observed in the court, and directing the prisoner to stand up.

He obeyed.

And then the venerable presiding judge arose and said:

"Victor Hartman! what have you to say why the sentence of the law should not be pronounced upon you?"

The wretched boy thus addressed, lifted his large, wild eyes appealingly to the judge's face, and replied:

"Not much, indeed, your honor. I did kill Henry Lytton, my benefactor; I never denied it, your honor. And I would have pleaded guilty to the charge when I was arraigned, only I was instructed not to do so. And besides, I did not feel so guilty as the charge made me out to be, for it said, 'With malice aforethought.' There was no malice, your honor. There was only the whisky and sudden anger. No one in the world but myself knows the facts—the whole truth, I mean—about that murder. And I, even if I should tell it, should not be believed, for I could not prove my words. Still, I would like to say something more for myself now, your honor, if I may have leave to do so."

"Prisoner, the court is prepared to hear anything you may have to say in your defense," somewhat curtly responded the judge.

The doomed man wiped the cold sweat from his forehead, nerved himself, and continued:

"Your honor, when I got out of my poor bed that morning of the murder, I had no more idea of the deed I should do before night than the youngest child that said his daily prayer at his mother's knees. I am soon to die, your honor, and die an ignominious death. I have not a hope in the world; for I have not a friend in the world. And so I wish to speak the truth.

"I went forth that morning innocent of the thought of doing any wrong, far less of doing murder. I had had no breakfast, and I was very hungry. I sought work, that I might get money and food. I found no work, but I found a comrade, who asked me into a dramshop to take a drink. I was half fainting from fasting; I was only too glad to accept his invitation. I went in, and took not one drink only, but two and three; and upon an empty stomach. Then my comrade went upon his way, and I on mine.

"I went to Mr. Arnott's woodyard, and asked him if he wanted a cart driver, and told him that I would work at lower wages than any other man he could get. Other men, I knew, got a dollar and a quarter a day. So when he offered me seventy-five cents I accepted the offer, and the matter seemed settled, when Mr. Lytton came in. Mr. Lytton had dealt a good deal with Mr. Arnott, and knew him well. Mr. Lytton had been my benefactor, and, of course, knew me well. As soon as he saw me he turned to the wood merchant and said:

" 'Are you thinking of employing that fellow, Arnott?'

"And Mr. Arnott said 'Yes.'

" 'Then don't do it. He is an incorrigible drunkard,' said Mr. Lytton. 'I have tried him time and again, and always found him false to every promise.'

"As soon as he had told this, Mr. Arnott turned to me and said:

" 'You may go, my man. I do not think that we shall want you.'

"I expostulated, and promised better things. In vain.

I was dismissed, and upon my protestation against what I considered gross injustice, I was instantly ordered to leave the office.

"Then it was that I turned to Mr. Lytton and shook my fist at him, and said: 'You shall pay for this'—the words that help to hang me, though I attached but little meaning to them then.

"Your honor, I left the office and walked up and down the streets, homeless, penniless, friendless and starving. If even a dog had licked my hand that day, it had not afterward been dyed with blood.

"By and by when, exhausted and despairing, I sat down on a curbstone near a dramshop, several of the devil's people came out in high glee. I did not know any of them. But they must have recognized me as a brother in sin and misery, for one of them, seeing me, said:

" 'Poor wretch! let's give him a drink. He'll not be any the worse for it.'

"And they took me into the shop and gave me a drink of rum. And then, being half crazy from drinking on an empty stomach from morning till afternoon, I told them all my troubles and my real or imaginary wrongs, and especially the wrong that Henry Lytton had done me, in depriving me of the chance of work.

"And they all sympathized with me, in a reckless and rollicking sort of way, and said that Lytton was a brute, and that if they were in my place they would give him a licking, and so forth. And they gave me two or three more drinks, and laughed at me and left me.

"I walked on rapidly toward—nowhere—until, being very weary, I sat down by the side of the road to rest. On one side of me were the high, rocky banks of the river; under my feet the river road; on the other side the river itself. I sat there, and might have fallen asleep but that the sound of coming steps aroused me.

"I looked up and saw Henry Lytton walking briskly and gayly onward. I knew that he was coming home from

the city, after his day's business, to his pleasant suburban villa. And my heart burned with anger against him, but not with 'bloodthirstiness,' as the prosecuting attorney said.

"He drew near me, and as I thought of the contrast in our situations—he going to his pleasant rural home, and I homeless, penniless, and starving by the roadside through his means—I lost all self-command, and staggered to my feet and threw myself in his way and accosted him. What I said or did afterward, I do not clearly remember; for, as I said before, I was quite mad from the effects of hunger, drunkenness, and what I considered bitter injuries. He, Mr. Lytton, then treated me with contempt and ignominy, well deserved, no doubt. But, then, I lost the last remnant of my reason. And I have no clear remembrance of what followed. All is dim. I have a vague impression that I picked up a heavy fragment of rock and struck him down with it.

"All I remember after that is waking up the next morning in the station house, and being told that I was arrested for murder.

"I know, of course, that my life cannot be spared. It is forfeited, and most justly forfeited, to the broken laws of the land. I must submit to my fate.

"But there is one thing for which I devoutly thank Heaven. I have not a friend in the world to mourn my doom. Your honor, I have done."

And here the wretched boy bowed and stood with depressed head, waiting to receive the awful sentence of the law.

The venerable presiding judge then arose and addressed the prisoner:

"Victor Hartman, you have been found guilty, after a careful and impartial trial, by a jury of your peers, of the awful crime of wilful murder—a crime, in your case, rendered even more atrocious by the circumstances under which it was committed. This murder was perpetrated

upon the person of your benefactor, for whom it has been proved that you laid in wait, and whom it is known you basely assassinated.

"You have endeavored to palliate your dreadful deed. It is needless to say that you have not succeeded in doing so. There is scarcely any one in the sound of my voice who does not concur in the verdict that has just been rendered, and look upon your deed as the premeditated crime of an assassin.

"Young in years, but old in sin, you have terminated your career of vice by the capital crime which will place you on the scaffold. And it becomes my duty to warn you against the entertainment of any vain hope of pardon or respite, or even of commutation of punishment; for there is not a chance in this world for you. And I here exhort and entreat you to use wisely the short time that is left you on earth in reflection upon your past life, repentance for your past crimes, and prayer for pardon to that all-merciful Lord from whom alone pardon may be sought and found. And now nothing remains for me to do but to pronounce upon you the sentence of the law."

And here the judge slowly put on the black cap, and spoke the dreadful words of doom that consigned the pale boy before him to an ignominious death.

With pallid cheek and quivering lips he heard his fate, and sank to his seat.

The order was given to remove the prisoner, and the court was immediately adjourned.

Two policemen took charge of the condemned. One snapped the handcuffs on his wrists; the other arranged a short cloak over his shoulders, and then they led him out between them.

As he passed on between these two policemen, hearing bitter but well-deserved reproaches, and hearing not one merciful accent, he bowed his head upon his breast until he came to the corner of the street leading to the prison,

when suddenly a sweet, compassionate voice stole upon his ear.

"Why, is that Hartman, the murderer they talk so much about—that poor, poor boy? Oh, I do feel so very sorry for him!" murmured the musical voice.

Hartman raised his bowed head, and saw standing by the palings of the City Hall Park a fair young girl of about fifteen years of age, with golden ringlets shading a snowy forehead, and tender blue eyes full of compassion. She was neatly dressed in a light-blue gingham suit and a white straw hat. She carried in her arms a pile of school books. And she was accompanied by other children, also carrying books. She was only a schoolgirl, but her sweet compassion touched the broken-hearted prisoner, and brought the tears to his eyes, as he faltered, in passing:

"I thank you, miss, for your kind words. Pray for the poor, sinful prisoner, for the Lord will hear you."

"Yes, I will pray for you, poor, poor soul! And you must pray for yourself, too, for the Lord will hear you just as soon as He will hear me, or anybody else. And maybe sooner, too, because you are in such heavy sorrow," said the fair girl, as he passed out of her hearing.

"I shall die within a few weeks; but if I could live to the age of threescore and ten, I should never forget that young angel's face," muttered the prisoner to himself, as he was led into the jail yard.

He was taken at once to his cell, and locked in. It was a very bare den, with whitewashed wall and grated door, a narrow cot bedstead, and a stone jug of water—nothing more, for the prisoner had neither friends nor relatives to supply him with such comforts as were not provided by the prison.

Hartman threw himself down upon his cot, and tried to pray; but the words of prayer came slowly and awkwardly to his unaccustomed lips.

"Some one must teach me how to pray," he said. And then he thought of the blue-eyed girl, and he added:

"She bade me pray. She could teach me how. She will pray for me to-night, I know. And I would rather have her prayers than a bishop's."

He folded his hands and closed his eyes. And Heaven had pity on him, for he slept, and dreamed of his childhood's home.

CHAPTER II

THE CASTAWAY

Now a few words as to the antecedents of this poor, guilty wretch, who was doomed to end a brief life of vice and crime by an early and ignominious death.

Victor Hartman was the only living son of a deceased farmer, who once lived upon a small rented farm in the vicinity of the city.

In his early childhood he lost his mother and several sisters and brothers.

At the age of ten years he was presented with a young stepmother, with whom he could not agree, and against whose authority he constantly rebelled.

He was therefore sent to a public school in the city, where he soon became equally noted for his quickness at learning and at all sorts of mischief.

At the age of thirteen years he ran away to sea, and went as cook's boy on a whaling vessel bound for the Antarctic Ocean.

He soon grew tired of the whaler, and took the first opportunity of deserting from her. While she was at anchor in one of the most southerly of the South American ports, he managed to make his escape and conceal himself on board of a brig bound for San Francisco.

After landing at San Francisco, he led a vagrant life in the city for several months, and then made his way to the gold diggings, where he was moderately fortunate.

He passed two or three years in California, and then tiring of that life, as he tired of everything, he made a voyage to China and Japan.

He deserted again at Yokohama, concealed himself until his ship sailed, and then he enlisted on a British merchantman bound for Sydney, Australia. As he had shipped only for the voyage, he left the ship as soon as he reached Sydney, and started for the gold fields of Australia.

He was not so successful here as he had been in California. He was soon reduced to such a state of destitution that he was compelled to work his way to the nearest seaport, where he shipped as seaman on the first homeward-bound vessel.

In due season his ship reached New York. As soon as the crew was paid off, he started for the South.

In due time he came to the village near which his father's farm stood.

He stopped at the little country tavern to get supper and make inquiries before walking out to the farm.

But ah! what sorrowful news here met the prodigal son! There was no father to welcome his return. That father had departed this life six years before. The farm had passed into other hands. The stock and implements and household furniture had been sold, and scattered far and wide. His stepmother had married again, and was now living in Minnesota with her new husband.

The effect of this news upon his mind was fatally depressing. He had now no desire to visit the old farm. His half-formed resolutions of amendment were utterly destroyed. The father for whose sake he might have reformed had passed to another world. The home to which he meant to have returned was in the hands of strangers.

Instead of the returned prodigal's most loving welcome and joyous feast in his father's house, he had his lodging in the dull village tavern, with the memory of his own sins and his father's broken heart for company.

He could not bear the situation. He resorted to the

only comfort he knew—the treacherous and fatal comfort of the bottle.

After deep potations, he went to bed, and fell into a heavy sleep that lasted long into the next morning. He arose about noon, and, after breakfasting, he took the next stagecoach that passed, and went back to the city—that city so soon to become the scene of his crimes and his punishment.

For a week or two after his arrival, he rambled about the town, living here and there in the lowest public-houses, until he had spent all his sailor's pay. And then it became necessary for him to seek employment, in order to obtain food.

But his wild and wandering life, his idle and reckless habits, had totally unfitted him for any but the humblest manual labor.

Occasionally he obtained a job to put in wood or coal, to drive a cart, or to carry a heavy parcel. And the pittance gained by these labors would be oftener spent in rum than in food.

Chance threw him in the way of Mr. Henry Lytton, a busy lawyer, who had his office in the city and his residence in a beautiful suburban villa.

Mr. Lytton employed him first to sweep and dust and build fires in his office. For a few days Hartman performed his duties faithfully. But the demon of drink had got too fast a hold upon him. Soon he began to neglect his work. His employer often came to the office in the morning, and found it closed, cold and comfortless, and his porter missing. Mr. Lytton soon discovered the cause of his boy's dereliction, and he expostulated with him. But in vain; for although Hartman would always promise to reform, he never did so, and his habits grew worse and worse.

Mr. Lytton discharged him.

We know the sequel of that sad story.

CHAPTER III

THE HOME OF THE VICTIM

About three miles south of the city, and upon a small hilly point jutting out into the river, stood the pretty villa known as Highsight, and once owned by the murdered lawyer Henry Lytton, if indeed a house so heavily mortgaged could be said to be owned by the nominal proprietor.

Henry Lytton was first a self-made, and then a self-marred man—a conjunction not at all uncommon.

He was the second son of a Southern planter, of good family, but of reduced fortune.

As the law of primogeniture had continued to be the rule of his family long after it had ceased to be a statute of the commonwealth, Henry Lytton, the younger brother, could not hope for an interest in the dilapidated mansion and exhausted acres of the old plantation, which was sure to be the sole inheritance of the eldest son.

Thus, seeing that he had his own way to make in the world, and being a very keen-witted young man, he resolved to give himself to the study of the law, and he persuaded his father to send him into the office of a city lawyer, where he could read law books and attend the lectures of the law college.

This was a serious expense to the impoverished father, who, however, willingly took upon himself the new burden.

And in due course of time Henry Lytton graduated, and was called to the bar.

He rose rapidly in his profession, and made much money.

He purchased an estate and built a beautiful country seat on the banks of the river, which, from its elevated position and extensive prospect, he called "Highsight."

He married a famous city beauty of old family and no

fortune, and he set up housekeeping with her, in his new country seat, in a style more in accordance with his pride than his purse.

This was the commencement of his ruin. He entertained company very frequently, and very expensively. He kept race horses and foxhounds, and a pleasure boat. And, worse than all, he gambled.

And thus it followed that although he made a great deal of money, he spent a great deal more than his income, and as the years went by he became more and more involved in debt.

Two children were born to him—a boy and a girl. But even the birth of these children failed to inspire him with any sense of a parent's responsibility. He continued his reckless pursuit of pleasure.

When his boy and girl were respectively four and two years of age, his beautiful wife died. And then he became more reckless than ever, as if he would drown grief in dissipation.

He was, perhaps, the most popular man in his own large circle of acquaintances. And he was generally believed to be as prosperous as he was popular. No one knew how deeply he was involved. No one suspected that the great lawyer was on the very brink of bankruptcy.

It was when his son was seventeen years of age, and his daughter fifteen, that his sudden and tragic death revealed the true state of his affairs.

When the coroner and jury with their attendant officers had left the house, it was discovered by the heart-broken boy and girl that there was not ready money enough to meet immediate and pressing demands. Some watches and jewelry were sent out and sold. And a telegram was dispatched to the grandfather, old Able Lytton, of Lytton Lodge, near Wendover, to tell him of the death of his younger son.

The grief-stricken old man came without delay, and

reached Highsight on the morning of the day appointed for the funeral.

He had seen very little lately of his son or of his grandchildren. The busy lawyer, equally devoted to his profession and his pleasures, had found little time to visit his aged parents. In fact, from the time that he had established himself at Highsight, he had never once returned to his old home.

But the old man, at rare intervals of three or four years, had come up to the city to see his son. Now, however, five years had passed since his last visit. And the son that he had last met in the full vigor of life and health, lay mutilated and dead in his room; and the boy and girl he had last seen as blooming children of twelve and ten years, were now a pale and sad youth and maiden of seventeen and fifteen years. And to add to his trouble, their deceased father, whom he had believed to be so prosperous and wealthy, had died on the very brink of bankruptcy and left an estate mortgaged to its full value and debts that could scarcely be paid by the sale of all his personal property, and thus left his son and daughter destitute.

On the day after the funeral, which was a grand and costly pageant, more in accordance with the late lawyer's expensive style of living than with his orphan children's destitute circumstances, the house being restored to order and quiet, old Able Lytton called his grandson and granddaughter to him, and said:

"My dear Alden and Laura, I must remain here for a few weeks to settle up your poor father's affairs as well as I can, for there is no one else but me to do it, I think."

The mourning youth and maiden made no answer, but clung to each other in their desolation. The old man went on to say:

"But you see, my dears, that it would be worse than vain to stay here an hour more than needful. The sooner we have a sale and pay off the debts, and leave the place, the better."

"I only want to stay near town long enough to see my father's murderer hung!" exclaimed the youth, his fists clenched, his lips trembling and his black eyes flashing fire.

"Hush, my boy, hush! The man will be hung, but you will not see it. Lord forbid that you should. The authorities will never let a boy behold an execution, even though it should be of the murderer of his own father. Lord forbid that they ever should. Now let us talk of something else," said the old man, solemnly.

"You may talk of what you please. I shall think only of the death of my father and the execution of his murderer," gloomily replied the boy.

The old man wisely refrained from replying to these dark words, and then went on to say:

"When we leave this house, I shall take you both home with me, for the present, to the old plantation. And so long as you shall need it, my home will be yours, of course. It will not be an elegant and refined place like this, but it will be a home of love and peace and grace. Your old grandmother, whom you have seldom seen, will welcome you with much affection. She would have come with me, but the sudden news of her son's death prostrated her too much to permit her to make the journey. I hope to find her better when we get home."

A few weeks from this time, the house and grounds were sold under the mortgage; and the household and office furniture, together with a valuable law library, were disposed of at public auction for the benefit of the creditors.

There was nothing left for the heirs of the deceased, not even enough to pay their traveling expenses from the city.

Their grandfather, old Able Lytton, as their nearest of kin, and their natural guardian, took the burden of their support upon himself, and resolved to convey them to his plantation near Wendover.

In leaving the bright home of his childhood, young

Alden Lytton had but one consolation—a very grim, revengeful one—that Victor Hartman had been convicted of murder in the first degree and condemned to death.

He would gladly have stayed in the city for a few days longer, to be present at the execution, or at least to be as near the scene as possible; but his grandfather, for the very opposite reason, the anxiety to escape the sight or hearing of the coming public tragedy, hurried their departure.

CHAPTER IV

MYSTERIOUS MISSIVES

A FEW days after the conviction of Hartman, the governor of the State, on retiring to his bedroom late in the evening, found upon his dressing-table a letter directed to himself in a strange handwriting.

Surprised at the incident, and curious to know what it might mean, he opened the letter, and, with increasing astonishment, read these few mysterious lines:

"To His Excellency the Governor—Sir: Victor Hartman has been convicted of the wilful murder of Henry Lytton, and has been condemned to die for that crime. Sir, Victor Hartman did not kill Henry Lytton. And if they hang him they will hang an innocent man. You alone can now save his life, and you must do it, or repent not doing it to the last day of your existence. Believe this as the true statement of One Who Knows."

The astonishment of the reader passed away with a smile of scorn, as he tore up the letter and threw it into the grate, saying:

"The shallowest and most transparent device to obtain a pardon that I ever heard of in all my life."

And so he dismissed the subject from his thoughts as too contemptible to be worthy of a moment's attention.

But in a few days he found another letter under his plate at the breakfast table. The handwriting, the envelope, the note paper, and the style of composition were all entirely different from those of the first; but the subject matter was the same, namely, to the effect that Victor Hartman was guiltless of the death of Henry Lytton, and that if Victor Hartman should be hung, his death would not be an execution, but a murder; that the governor must save him, or never cease to deplore not doing so.

This letter met the fate of its predecessor. But the matter was not treated with quite so much contempt.

On the contrary, his excellency closely questioned the members of his family. They were, besides himself, his aged mother, his widowed sister, and his young daughter.

But neither grandma, auntie, nor Emma knew anything about the strange letter. They had not even seen it until papa drew it out from under his plate.

The governor next called up his servants and put them individually and collectively under examination and cross-examination. But each and all denied knowledge of the letter.

The governor continued to receive the mysterious letters, iterating and reiterating the writer's positive knowledge of the condemned man's innocence, and urging and insisting upon a full remission of the sentence.

They still reached their destination in the strangest manner—one being drawn from his pocket with his handkerchief, another found in his hat with his gloves; one dropped from the folds of his umbrella, and another laid in his path as he walked before his own door.

The utmost vigilance of the police failed to detect the writer.

Three days before the one appointed for the execution of Victor Hartman, Governor Cavendish, with his family,

left town for his country seat among the Blue Ridge Mountains, where it was his custom to spend a few weeks of the midsummer of each year. Only on this occasion he left town earlier than usual in the season, and it was said, and not without some good reason, that he went to be out of the way of the public tragedy to be enacted the next day.

He went by train to Wendover, a picturesque mountain hamlet, where his own traveling carriage met him by appointment to take him and his party to their home.

The ancient colonial mansion known as Cliff Hall was a large, gray stone building, situated at the base of the Blue Cliffs, a spur of the Blue Ridge. It had been in the possession of the Cavendish family from the first settlement of the country.

The road from Wendover to Cliff Hall wound through a beautiful wood for about seven miles. It was late in the evening of the second day's journey when the carriage with the travelers reached Cliff Hall.

The widowed sister of the governor was there to receive them, and all things were prepared for their comfort.

"You are down a month earlier than usual this year, Charles," said Mrs. Wesley, as she welcomed her brother.

"Yes, Susan; there are some parts of my official duty I never can perform without much pain, and——"

"I understand. Signing a death warrant is one of them."

"Yes. And to be frank with you, I have come down here to be out of the way of seeing or hearing of the execution."

He made a hasty toilet, and then went down to the dining-room, where he found his venerable mother and his young daughter already dressed and waiting for him.

They were soon joined by his sister. And then the whole party sat down to supper.

The meal was scarcely halfway through, when a loud knock was heard at the hall door. Now, if this knock had come to the street door of the city mansion, there would have been nothing strange or unusual in it. But coming

to the door of that remote mountain home, at that late hour, and upon the first night of the master's arrival, it was, to say the least, rather startling.

All looked up from the supper table to gaze at each other inquiringly. But before a question could be asked, Jerome, the hall waiter, entered and put a folded slip of paper in his master's hands.

The governor opened it, read it, and changed color so quickly that his mother anxiously inquired:

"What is it, Charles?"

Without answering, without even hearing the venerable lady's question, the governor turned to the servant and said, hastily:

"Show the visitor into my study, and say that I will meet him there immediately."

The servant bowed, and went out with his message.

"Who is it, Charles?" inquired his sister.

But Governor Cavendish hurried from the room without seeming to know that she had spoken.

Half an hour passed, and the study bell was then so sharply rung that the hall footman ran in haste to answer it.

Both ladies simultaneously arose from the table and went to the door that led from the dining-room to the hall. And there they waited anxiously, until the footman came out from the study and hurried past them.

They called after him in suppressed tones:

"What is the matter, Jerome?"

"I don't know, ma'am. Master has ordered the carriage with fresh horses to take him all the way to Wendover, to meet the midnight train," answered the man, as he hurried out on his errand.

"Good gracious, is he going back to town to-night?" exclaimed Mrs. Wesley.

"What on earth can take him there?" inquired old Mrs. Cavendish.

Both questions were partly answered by the appearance

of Governor Cavendish himself, who came out from his study, looking pale, and anxious, and, in fact, more profoundly agitated than they had ever seen him.

"Charles, is it true that you are going back to town to-night?" inquired the old lady, as he was rushing past.

"Yes, mother; I am called there by the most imperative duty," he answered, as he hurried up the stairs.

"That's the strangest thing I ever knew him to do in my life," complained the old lady.

"I suppose, in fact, that this visitor has brought some important news, that makes it necessary for him to go," observed the younger one, as they still lingered near the dining-room door.

The sound of the carriage wheels was heard rolling up to the hall door. And at the same moment Mr. Cavendish came down the stairs prepared for his sudden night journey, and followed by his servant carrying his portmanteau.

He stopped first at the study door, knocked, and said:

"I am ready."

The mysterious stranger came out.

Both ladies looked at him. But they could see nothing of his face, for his coat collar was turned up around his cheeks, and his hat brim was pulled down over his brows. He passed them very quickly and went out. And the next moment they heard the sound of his horse's hoofs galloping away.

Governor Cavendish approached his astonished relatives. He was pale and agitated, yet he strove to conceal his emotion under a commonplace manner, as he said, hastily:

"Good-by, mother. Good-by, sister. Take care of Emma, and expect me back in two or three days."

And, before they could express their amazement, he was gone.

As the sound of his carriage wheels died away in the distance, they returned to the drawing room, where their attention was immediately drawn to Emma.

The fair girl was sitting at the marble center table with

her arms resting upon its top, and her head bowed, until all its light ringlets drooping veiled her face.

"And what ever can be the matter with that girl? She has been moping all the evening. I am afraid she is going to be ill," said Mrs. Wesley, gazing fixedly at her niece.

"Come here, Emma. Let me look at you, my love," said the old lady, as she sank down into her easy-chair.

Finding herself noticed, the young girl would willingly have escaped from the room; but at the command of her grandmother she lingered.

"Come, my child. I want to look at you," repeated the old lady.

Then Emma came and stood at her side, with eyelids drooping and bosom heaving.

"What ails you, Emma? Are you ill?"

She shook her fair head, but her lips quivered.

"Then what is amiss?"

"Oh, nothing, grandma. Nothing with me—only—it is very foolish, but I cannot help it." And she burst into tears, and sobbed convulsively.

The old lady drew the girl closer to her side, as she said, tenderly:

"Now I know you never weep without a cause, Emma, for you never were hysterical; and I insist on your telling me what troubles you."

"Oh, dear grandma, never mind me," sobbed the girl.

"So you won't tell me, then?"

"Oh, yes, I will. But it is so weak and foolish of me to—— But I cannot help it. Oh, grandma! it is about that wretched boy who is going to be—executed to-morrow. What a night this must be to him! Oh! oh!"

And the girl dropped her head upon the old lady's shoulder and sobbed afresh.

"What nonsense, Emma! The wretch is nothing to us," said Mrs. Wesley.

"I know it, Aunt Susan; but I am so sorry for him."

"And murderers ought to be hanged, for the protection of society."

"I know it; but I am sorry for him."

The old lady bent over and caressed her, and softly inquired:

"Why do you feel so much pity for this particular man, Emma? You felt none for Burke, who was hung last winter."

"No. I never thought about him. And perhaps I should never have thought about this one, either, only I saw him once."

"You saw him, Miss Cavendish? That was very shocking!" exclaimed Mrs. Wesley.

"Yes, Aunt Susan. I was coming home from school that afternoon, and I passed by the City Hall just as they were bringing him out, after his sentence. And when I saw his poor, pale face and wild, distressful eyes, I pitied him, and I said so to my companions. And he heard me, and turned his poor eyes on me, and thanked me for pitying him, poor soul! as if there was any merit in doing what I could not help. And he asked me to pray for him. And I promised to do so, and I have done so every day since. And oh, grandma!" she added, turning to her best friend, "this is his last night, this awful night, and I can do nothing for him!"

"Yes, my child, you can still pray for him," said the old lady, kindly.

"Young people should never hear of such dreadful things," said Mrs. Wesley, warmly.

"They will all have to go out of the world then. For all who are in it, young and old, tender or hard, must hear of such things. But come, Emma. You and I will go and pray for the poor soul. Yes, and hope for him, too; for, after all, we do not know what to-morrow may bring forth."

CHAPTER V

THE MYSTERY OF THE POINT

It was absolutely necessary for Mr. Lytton and his grandchildren to exercise the closest economy in their traveling expenses. So instead of going by the railway train, that would have taken them across the country to Wendover in twenty-four hours, they embarked on board a small river coaster, on which by day they shared the narrow deck with the captain and the hands, and by night were cribbed in the close cabin below.

After nearly a week of beating down stream against a head wind, they were put on shore at a place called "White Perch Point," distant about thirty miles from Lytton Lodge, and about twenty from Wendover.

On the extreme end of this point was a lighthouse, now, strange to say, kept by an old woman and a girl.

And a few hundred yards further inland, out of the reach of the wave, stood the neat white cottage occupied by the two women.

On the same side of the river, about an eighth of a mile from the lighthouse and the keeper's cottage, stood a cluster of white buildings, looking like a small village. But they were only the White Perch Point Hotel and its various outhouses.

This point was once a very popular resort for excursionists, amateur fishermen, and other pleasure seekers; but now it had fallen from its ancient prosperity, and presented rather a dilapidated and neglected appearance.

The small rowboat from the schooner landed our travelers at the broken and decayed wharf, and then returned to the vessel.

"I remember, my children, when this used to be a very fashionable summer resort, frequented by all the best families of the neighborhood, for salt-water bathing, or for

fishing, or for picnics, and even for balls," said Able Lytton, as he walked with his young people up the long, grass-grown road leading from the wharf to the house.

"And such a beautiful place as it might be made! Why has it fallen into such decay?" inquired dark-eyed Laura.

"Well, my darling, the fact is, old Fanning and his seven sons, who used to keep the place, were their own best customers in all the most expensive and delusive pleasures of the place, especially in wines, liquors, cigars, cards and so forth. We know the end of these things. The father died. The sons scattered. One went to Texas, another to California, another to sea. Each took his separate road to ruin, and doubtless arrived there. The eldest retained the house here, and runs it after a fashion; for when he had paid his brothers and sisters the legacies left them, and had discharged the debts of the estate, there was very little left to carry on the business, even if Fred Fanning had ever possessed any business capacity. His wife—strange to tell, a lady by birth and education—is no better as a landlady than he is as a landlord. And you see the result."

By this time the party had drawn near the house, and were met by a loitering old negro man, who touched his hat and stood, as if waiting orders.

"Well, Uncle Adam, how are all your folks?" kindly inquired Mr. Lytton.

"Lor', Marse Able, how you 'spect dem gwine to be?" asked the negro, scratching his head.

"Why, nothing wrong up there, I hope?" inquired Mr. Lytton. "There is mostly something wrong there, however," he added, in a lower tone.

"Why, lor', Marse Able, ain't you hearn?" asked the man, opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

"What's amiss? Has there been another flood, another fire, another levying, or what?"

"Oh, Marse Able, sir, worse'n all that put together—a 'lopement, sir."

"An elopement! Who's eloped, in the name of wonder?"

"Miss Ivy, sir."

"Ivy! that child! Nonsense!"

"Truth I'm telling you, sir; 'deed it is! Miss Ivy was at boardin'-school in de city, an' dere comed a letter down to Marse Fred from the schoolmistress, axin' had she comed home to us maybe, and telling us how she was a missin' from de schoolhouse ebber since the night before, and dey didn't know what had comed of her. Didn't mistress faint dead away on the spot? And didn't marster go to town a hoppin'? Umph-hum! I tell you."

"For Heaven's sake! when did this all happen?"

"Why, 'bout two mont's ago, Marse Able, sir—jes' about —may be little more."

"And what has become of the unfortunate girl? She couldn't have been more than fourteen or fifteen years old."

"She was fifteen last May; but that forrard of her age —umph-hum!—I tell you."

"What has become of her? Where is she now? Why did she leave her school? Who enticed her away?"

"Don't know nuffin 'bout her. Ef marse an' mis' do dey keeps it to derselves close 'nough—umph-hum!—I tell you. It's my 'pinion, Marse Able, as dem two nebber mentions ob dere darter's name, eben private 'tween derselves. 'Cause why? you axes. 'Cause dere's my darter Rosy; she as used to be own maid to Miss Ivy, ebber sence dey bofe could run alone, till Miss Ivy went to that cussed infunnelly city boardin'-school as has been her ruination. Well, my darter Rosy hasn't done nuffin but pine and pin eber sence her young mistress run away, nobody knowed where. And she have got a dreadful crik into her neck, which it's my firm belief as she got it all along o' twisting round her head to put her ear to the keyholes, to listen ef she could hear anything 'bout her young mistress, when marse and mistress was 'lone togedder. But she nebber heard nuffin. I knows

it. 'Cause ef she had she'd a sure to a told us. 'Cause why? you axes ag'in. Why, 'cause she is a leaky wessel, and can't keep nuffin in. Which is de reason why I knows as marse and mis' nebber talks ob Miss Ivy—no, not eben when dey is 'lone togedder. Now, Marse Able, 'scuse me for talkin' to you so long; but you know how it is yerseff. What you tinks 'bout, dat you talks 'bout."

"I know, Adam. 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' "

"Now, Marse Able, I's here to 'ceive your orders, sir."

"Well, Adam, I would like to have—— Oh, dear me, all this is very dreadful. It seems scarcely right to intrude on the family, or to give one selfish thought to our own interests," murmured Mr. Lytton, breaking off from his intended orders.

"Hy! What you talkin' 'bout, Marse Able? De worl' got to go 'long, ef de hebbens falls, ain't it? Which I mean to say as de pot's got to bile, let alone who runs away or who stays home. Which marse and mis' hab got to 'tend to dere business and entertain sich trabelers as come 'long, whedder or no. So, Marse Able, gib me your orders, sar."

"My orders are simple enough. Just send some one to the wharf to bring up the trunks and carpetbags."

"I'll send down my son Wash. Here, you Wash!" cried the negro, calling a dusky youth who was seated on the ground mending nets.

"And then we shall want dinner, and afterward the carriage to take us home."

"Lor', marse!" said the old man, "you can hab de dinner all right 'nough. But as for de carridge—— Well, you could hab dat too, only dere an't no horse to draw it. Marse Fred he done gone 'way on de horse, and dere an't no knowin' when he gwine to be back. Wash," he added, addressing his son, who had just run up to the spot, "you get de big wheelbarrow and go down to de wharf, and wheel up de gentleman and lady's baggage. You hear me good now, don't yer?"

"Yes, daddy," answered the lad, running off to obey.

The old negro led the travelers up to the house, through the long piazza, and into a large, airy, barely furnished parlor, where he invited them to be seated, while he went to inform his mistress of their arrival.

"This ought to be a very pleasant, cheerful place, grandpa," said Laura, as she walked from front to back of the long parlor—"a very cheerful, pleasant place indeed! Sunny, breezy, with the sea on one side and the woods on the other. But somehow or other, I find it very gloomy and depressing. What makes it seem so?"

"I don't know, my child. I feel the influence also, but without being able to account for it," answered Mr. Lytton.

At this moment the door opened, and a lady of great beauty slowly advanced into the room.

She was taller than the usual height of women, and very perfectly proportioned, with a carriage at once stately and graceful. Her features were of classic regularity. Her complexion was very fair and clear, yet her eyes, eyebrows and hair were jet black. She wore a black silk dress, rather rusty, and neat white linen collar and cuffs. This was Mrs. Fanning, born Cavendish, the beautiful younger sister of Governor Charles Cavendish.

She who, years before, had stooped from her own high estate to wed Fred Fanning, the wild, handsome son of the landlord of the White Perch Point Hotel, and who by that rash act had opened an impassable gulf between herself and her proud family.

She came slowly into the room, and, as she drew near, Able Lytton noticed a look of profound melancholy, almost of despair, on her beautiful, pale face.

"Mr. Lytton! Is this you? I had not expected—they did not tell me—ah, Heaven!" she cried, incoherently, and sank trembling upon the nearest seat.

Extremely surprised at the strange effect his presence

seemed to have upon this lady, Able Lytton stood bowing and embarrassed.

Mrs. Fanning recovered her composure with an effort.

"Pardon me," she said, "pardon me, sir. You must think this emotion very singular, but, in fact, my nervous system has been severely tried of late, and—I did not expect to see you here."

"Is this lady insane," inquired Able Lytton of himself. Then, speaking soothingly to her, he said:

"Pardon me, rather, madam, if my arrival is untimely or inconvenient, and permit me to depart at once."

"Depart? Where would you go at this hour, and without horses? There is no place that you could reach on foot before midnight. Besides, you have young people with you. You must remain where you are. Your visit, I assure you, is neither unwelcome nor inconvenient. It is my nervous system that is out of order. Pray do not mind it."

Then, turning toward Alden and Laura, she smiled, and said, interrogatively:

"These young people?"

"Are the children of my late unhappy son. I am taking them to Lytton Hall, which is to be their home for the present," answered Able Lytton.

And then he was again surprised and shocked to see the lady start, tremble, and cover her eyes with her hands.

In another moment, however, she controlled herself, smiled, and nodded to the youth and maiden, and then rang a small hand-bell that stood upon the table near her.

A neat mulatto girl answered it, and stood courtesying in the door.

"Show these two gentlemen to the large front chamber over this, and the young lady to the small hall chamber adjoining."

Rosy, the mulatto girl, courtesied again, and stood smilingly ready to attend the guests when they should please to move.

The mistress of the house, with a grave bow, passed silently out of the room.

"Oh, grandpa!" whispered Laura, as soon as the lady had gone. "Oh, grandpa! don't let us stay here. Let us go away—somewhere! anywhere!"

"There is nowhere we can go to sleep, my dear, unless Mr. Fanning should return very soon with the horse, so that we could get home," replied Mr. Lytton.

"Oh, grandpa, we could sleep in a negro's cabin. In a barn!—anywhere rather than here."

"Don't talk nonsense, my child," said the old gentleman, rising to follow his guide to the bedrooms.

Upstairs the travelers found the same signs of poverty and neglect. The bedrooms, though clean, were very scantily and plainly furnished, and though there was plenty of water, there was a very limited supply of soap and towels.

When the travelers had refreshed themselves with a better wash than they had been able to indulge in on the schooner, Mr. Lytton came out of his room and rapped at Laura's door, and said:

"Come, my love! If you are ready, we will take a walk over to the lighthouse. There is plenty of time to go there and return before dinner will be ready. And we have been cribbed up in the schooner so long, that a walk will do us good. Don't you think so?"

"Anything is better than staying here, grandpa. I know now what's the matter with the house. It is not really the house, but the lady! That lady gives me the horrors, grandpa," said Laura, as she made her appearance in her black bombazine dress and black crape hat.

They were next joined by Alden.

"How empty this great barn of a house seems!" said Laura, as they all went downstairs and out upon the lawn without meeting a soul.

They went down to the beach, and then along the beach

toward the extremity of the point where the lighthouse stood.

"And now," said old Able Lytton, "I wish to show you a real heroine of humble life. Look at that lighthouse. It is kept and tended by a girl of eighteen."

"A girl of eighteen!" echoed both his hearers.

"Yes, my children, strange as it seems."

"But would such a one be trusted with such a responsible duty?" inquired Alden.

"She is, at all events. I will tell you how it happened. The lighthouse was kept for years—twenty, at least, I should think—by a man of the name of Taylor. He lived at the lighthouse cottage with his wife and his orphan niece, Mabel. As the man grew infirm the child used to help him with his duties. And as the years passed, gradually the whole onus of the duties passed from the failing old man to the growing young girl. At last Taylor died. His widow petitioned to be left in charge of the lighthouse. And having satisfactorily proved that she was capable of taking care of it, or rather that Mabel was, she received the appointment."

"And you say the girl does all the duties?" inquired Laura.

"Since that time, which is over two years, Mabel has done all the duties. And they are attended with more difficulty and danger than you would suppose. Look up at the lighthouse."

"We see it."

"Now look at the lighthouse cottage."

"Yes."

"They are some hundred yards apart. Yet every evening at sunset, in all weathers, sick or well, that young girl goes and climbs to the top of that tower and lights the lamp. Every night, in all seasons of the year, in all states of the atmosphere, whether it be a bright moonlight or starlight night in June, or whether it be a dark and stormy night in January, that young maiden goes alone at

midnight to the top of that tower to feed and trim her lamp; and every morning at sunrise, winter and summer, in fair or foul weather, she goes the same road to put out her lamp."

"A brave girl!" said Alden.

"A brave, bright, cheerful girl as one would wish to meet in a day's journey. Nor is her hard duty at the lighthouse all she has to do. She does the whole work of the cottage for herself and her aged relative, and keeps herself and home beautifully neat and clean."

"I should like to know her," said Laura, musingly.

"You shall know her, my love. We will call at the cottage and rest, and wait until sunset, when we may go with her to the lighthouse and see her light her lamp," said the old gentleman, kindly.

CHAPTER VI

THE LIGHTHOUSE LASS

THEY now left the stunted copsewood that bordered the shore below the hotel, and came upon the long sandy point where neither tree nor shrub was to be seen, only the glare of sunshine upon the barren shore and blue sea, and the tall white tower of the lighthouse, and the long, low cottage of the keeper.

The cottage was of one story, with a steep roof. It was surrounded by a piazza, and inclosed within a fence. And house, piazza and fence were whitewashed. Neither vine nor flower grew in the barren lot. The only relief to the eye from the glare of light was to be found in the dark-green color of the window shutters.

A little white gate admitted the visitors to a narrow gravel walk that led up to the house, where, under the shade of the piazza, sat a neatly dressed old lady, knitting.

She glanced keenly through her spectacles at the visitors, and then arose quickly to welcome them, exclaiming gladly:

"Dear heart, Mr. Lytton, is it you? The sight of you would cure blindness. Sit you down here where we get the breeze. It is cooler here than in the house. And, dear me! these young people are never yours?"

"They are my grandchildren, ma'am. Alden and Laura, this is Mrs. Taylor, the keeper of the Perch Point Lighthouse, of whom you have heard me speak," said Mr. Lytton, as he seated himself upon the plain bench of the piazza.

The youth and maiden smiled, and came up to the old lady who shook hands with them kindly, and said:

"Yes, the keeper, my young gentleman and lady, but not the tender. Mab does all the work," explained Mrs. Taylor, as she pointed to seats for her young visitors.

"Where is Mabel?" inquired Mr. Lytton.

"Just this moment gone in to get her hat and key to go over to the lighthouse."

At that moment the door opened, and Mabel came out.

Alden and Laura had expected to see a fine, tall, strong —well, an able-bodied girl; that is about the word.

And now they saw a delicate, slender little fairy, with a snow-white complexion, large, clear, light-blue eyes, and flying hair so fair that its hue was between silvery and golden. This fairy was clad in a light-blue gingham dress, with a white muslin apron and a white straw hat.

She smiled when she saw visitors, and then recognizing Mr. Lytton, she went up to him and offered her hand.

"Ah! how do you do, my dear?" heartily exclaimed the old gentleman, cordially clasping her hand. "And here are my grandchildren come to call on you. Laura and Alden, this is Miss Mabel."

She shook hands with her two young visitors, and then looking at their grandfather, smiled and pointed significantly to the low-descending sun.

"Ah! I see! Yes, your duty is imperative. You must

go and light your lamp, and as the sun sinks below the horizon the flame must rise above the water. So go on, my dear; and if you will permit us, I and my young folks will go with you."

"Certainly; I shall be really glad to have you go. Only I should tell you, in honesty, that the lighthouse, like some other things, is seen better distant than near, and better without than within. But come," she said, leading the way, with a smile.

They went out of the little gate, and walked through the deep sand out to the extreme end of the point, where the lighthouse lifted its slim, white tower to the sky.

Mabel was right. It was beautiful to behold from the outside, but it was dingy, smoky and greasy within.

They wound up a narrow spiral staircase of some hundred steps that took them slowly to the top floor, from which a movable ladder arose to the lantern.

Mabel went up this ladder alone, and filled, trimmed and lighted her lamp. The others stood below at its foot, and watched her.

In a moment the light streamed up from the top of the tower. And then Mabel closed the door of her lantern, and came down.

"And you come in all weathers, morning, evening and midnight, to tend this lamp!" said the old gentleman, when they found themselves at the foot of the tower again.

"Yes, sir; it is my business," answered Mabel.

"But, my child, are you not afraid to come here alone, especially at midnight?" he inquired, as they walked on toward the cottage.

Mabel opened her blue eyes wide with surprise, and simply echoed the word:

"Afraid?"

"Yes, especially at midnight, and more especially in dark, stormy winter weather?"

"Why, no, sir, certainly not. Why ever should I be afraid?" inquired the girl.

"Because you are but a slight young creature, and the way to the tower by night is dark and lonely, and the tower itself is very dismal, especially at midnight."

"I know; but why should that make me afraid?" inquired the young heroine.

"Whe-ew! I'm sure I don't know, if you don't; but then fear is like jealousy—fear is not ever fearful for a cause, but fearful that it is fearful!"

Mabel's soft, silvery laughter broke upon the air like a bird's carol.

"That reminds me of auntie," she said. "Auntie does not like to be left alone at midnight, when I go to feed the lamp. She always tells me to hurry back like a good girl, and adds, 'Not that I'm afraid to stay her alone, Mab. I'm only afraid of being frightened!' "

The two young people laughed at this "bull," and had scarcely time to compose their features to decent gravity when they reached the cottage gate.

Auntie, whom they had been laughing at, was standing at the gate ready to receive them. She invited them to come in and stay to tea; but Mr. Lytton excused himself and his young people, and they took leave of the old lady and the brave girl, and turned their steps toward the hotel.

CHAPTER VII

THE LANDLORD'S RETURN

"HAS your master returned with the horse?" inquired Mr. Lytton, of a colored boy whom he met in the front yard.

"No, sir, he haven't. We dem dunno what de name o' sense keep Marse Freddy 'way so long. He an't use to stayin' way so long, 'deed he an't," replied the boy.

Mr. Lytton and his young party went on to the house, and found their dinner awaiting them.

After dinner they sat out on the piazza watching the moonlit sea, until quite a late hour. Then they separated and retired for the night.

Laura, in her little room, soon fell asleep. So did Alden, who had a bed in his grandfather's spacious chamber.

But as for old Mr. Lytton himself, he could not sleep well. A strange restlessness and depression possessed him. If he fell into a fitful slumber, he soon awoke with a start, and with a strange sense of pain and peril. So he continued all night.

Near morning he heard the sound of horses' feet galloping up to the door, followed by loud knocking, and by the hurrying footsteps of the awakened servants, the opening of the door, and the voice of the master as he entered.

"Fanning has come in at last. I am glad of it. I shall now be able to take my young people home early this morning," said Mr. Lytton, as he turned over and once more tried to sleep.

He was just sinking off into unconsciousness when the sound of voices in the next room fully aroused him.

His own bed was against the partition wall between the two rooms, so that he could hear quite distinctly.

"Who did you say had come?" asked the voice of the man Fanning.

"Old Mr. Lytton and his two grandchildren," answered the voice of the wife.

"Good Heaven!"

This exclamation was uttered in a tone of dismay, almost of horror. And then the voices sank to low, painful murmurs, that were quite inaudible until that of the man broke forth with some excitement:

"I cannot see them! I cannot see them! Why in the name of perdition are they here at all?"

"Fred, it could not be helped. They landed from a schooner, and walked up to the house. Rose, who did

not know them, came and told me guests had come. In our circumstances customers are not to be neglected. I went down into the parlor to see them. Judge my horror when I met the old man and his grandchildren!" moaned the woman.

"I wish you had not taken them in at all."

"They were already in."

"Then I wish you had sent them away."

"My poor dear, how could I? They were indeed most anxious to continue their journey, but there was no conveyance. They were forced to stay here, and I to keep them."

"I will not see them! I will not see them!" groaned the man.

And then again their voices sank out of hearing.

Able Lytton was much astonished by what he had involuntarily overheard. That they should both be deeply grieved and distracted by the fate worse than that of death that had befallen their young only daughter, he could easily understand; but what had he or his grandson and daughter to do with that, that their presence in the house should produce a panic?

It was quite in vain even to try to comprehend the cause.

While perplexing himself over the question, he fell asleep; and having waked and watched so long that night, he now slept so soundly that it was broad day before he awoke.

He got up and opened the front window, and looked out upon the broad expanse of water before him, and upon the distant point, with its lighthouse.

On the lawn before the window he saw Laura and Alden walking and talking together. He tapped upon the window-pane and beckoned Alden to come up.

And when the boy came into the room, he said:

"You were asleep when I arose, sir; so I dressed myself and went down very softly so as not to awaken you."

"Good lad, you were right. But now we must get aw

from here this morning, as soon as possible," said the old man gravely.

"Oh, yes, sir! It is a very beautiful place indeed, and would be a very delightful one if there were only pleasant people living on it. But oh, my goodness! if the mistress of the house is a handsome ogress, the master is a horridly unhandsome ogre," said the youth.

"He didn't use to be," muttered Mr. Lytton, reflecting upon the night's strange conversation that he had overheard.

"He is now, you bet."

"You have seen him, then?"

"I just have. I was walking round the house, 'prospecting,' and I came upon him in the barnyard. Oh, my gracious! Didn't he glare at me as if he would like to 'have my marrow to butter his bread,' only he didn't dare to touch me. And then he turned off short, and walked as fast as he could in another direction."

"He must have changed greatly since I saw him last. Now, Alden, while I am dressing I wish you to go down and say that we would like breakfast immediately, and also like to have the carriage at the door, that we may commence our journey as soon as breakfast is over. Go now, my boy. Ah, yes," he continued, after Alden had left the room. "Fred Fanning must have changed greatly from the jolly dog I once knew him to be. And perhaps the loss of his daughter may have deranged his mind. Heaven knows it may well have done so."

So saying, Able Lytton began to dress himself.

As soon as he was ready he went downstairs, where in the front hall, he met a negro lad who told him that breakfast was on the table.

He went to the breakfast room, where he found his young people already awaiting him. There was neither the host nor the hostess present to receive them. They sat down to the table. And Rose, the pretty mulatto girl, waited on them.

The breakfast in itself was excellent, but a nameless gloom hung over the place that somewhat spoiled the appetite of the old man. Nothing but repletion could ever affect that of the young people, who were at the age to lose their appetites only "presently after dinner."

When their morning meal was over, they went upstairs to get ready for their journey.

On coming down again they found the carriage at the door, with their luggage strapped on behind.

But neither host nor hostess were there to see them off. Only the coachman was in his seat, and a negro lad was in attendance.

"Here, you, sir!" said Able Lytton, calling to the lad. "What is your name, sir?"

"Taters, marster. Don't you 'member me?" inquired the boy.

Able Lytton burst out laughing.

"Oh, yes, I know you," he said. "You are Mithridates. How do you do?" And he shook hands with the boy.

Then turning to his young folks, he said, still laughing:

"This youth is a godson of mine. I stood sponsor for him when I was here some years ago. I gave him a fine name—Mith-ri-da-tes—and lo! after their manner they have curtailed it and corrupted it until it has come to—'Taters!' Well, Taters, I have been looking all over the house for your master or your mistress, and I can find neither. I want to pay my bill before I leave. Go get it."

"If you please, marster, my mistress told me to tell you, if you axed for it, as how there wasn't no bill ag'in yer."

"No bill! nonsense! This is a hotel. Where is your master?"

"In the barroom, sir."

"No, he isn't. I was in there looking for him."

"I know he wasn't then, sir, but he's just gone in. You can see him through the windy, if you look."

Able Lytton lifted his eyes and saw Fred Fanning stand-

ing before the counter, with his back turned toward the window.

He immediately went into the house, and through a side door into the barroom, and clapping the landlord on the back, exclaimed heartily:

"Hallo! my fine fellow; is this the way you treat an old friend?"

Fanning started as if he had been shot through the heart, and glared into the face of Able Lytton, with terror and amazement in every feature of his own.

"Good Heaven, man! what is the matter with you?" exclaimed Mr. Lytton, gazing with surprise and grief upon the fearfully changed aspect of his old acquaintance, whom he remembered as the heartiest and merriest young landlord in the whole countryside. Now the once stout form was wasted to a skeleton; the fair, ruddy complexion was blanched to marble; the laughing blue eyes were wide open, and glaring as with the fire of insanity.

"Yes, the loss of his daughter has certainly turned his head, though why his insanity should take the particular form of horror of me is more than I can tell," thought Able Lytton, and then he repeated his question more kindly.

"Why, Fanning, what ails you, man?"

"I—I thought you had gone!" faltered the landlord.

"Gone? I'm not in the habit of going without paying my score. Come, collect your senses, and—collect your bill. I am here to pay it."

"I—I have no bill against you. I cannot take money of you."

"Stuff and nonsense! You always did, you know. There!" said Mr. Lytton, laying down a ten dollar bill. "That must be something like the amount. If it's over, give the surplus to the servants; if it's under, let me know the deficiency at your leisure. Good-by. Give my respects to madam."

And Able Lytton frankly held out his hand.

But the unhappy man shrank from it, muttering hastily:

"I cannot touch your hand! I cannot touch your money! Take it up, and go." And he pointed frowningly to the note.

"Mad! mad as a March hare!" said Able Lytton, and leaving the note lying upon the counter, he walked out of the house.

"Has your master been long in this condition?" he asked abruptly of the lad, who was still in attendance near the carriage.

"Sar?" inquired the boy, puzzled.

"Has your master been crazy long?"

"Lor', no, sar! Marse Fred an't crazy."

"What's the matter with him, then?"

"Nuffin an't de matter wid him, let alone he's wrong in his head all along o' a frettin' arter Miss Ivy," answered the boy opening his eyes.

"Oh!" muttered Mr. Lytton, as he stepped into the carriage.

"Take the Wendover road," he called to the coachman, as he closed the door.

The man turned his horses' heads from the water view and drove around the house to the back of the premises and through a back gate and out into a private road leading to the Perch Point and Wendover Turnpike.

This road led duly from the coast to the interior of the country, passing for the first dozen miles through a thick wood, now verdant with the freshness of early summer.

A drive of four hours through this sylvan scenery brought them to the village of Wendover, on Red Rock River, at the Red Rock Pass.

It was noon when they drew up at the "Reindeer," the principal hotel of the little town.

"I think we will stop here to lunch and rest before going further. So you may put up your horses, Cyrus, and take your ease," said Mr. Lytton, as he alighted from the carriage, followed by Alden and Laura.

Mr. Lytton was about as well known at the "Reindeer" as the landlord himself.

So he had no sooner entered the parlor with his young people than mine host came bustling in to welcome him, exclaiming, as he held out his hand:

"Ah, ha! So you're back again! How do you do? How do you do? Hope you mean to stop with us a while."

"We wish to get home this evening. I shall send back Fanning's carriage from this point, and take one with fresh horses from you to convey us on to the Lodge, thank you," said Mr. Lytton, cordially grasping and shaking the offered hand of his host.

"Oh, but you will stay and dine? We have some of the finest trout ever drawn from a mountain brook," exclaimed the landlord.

"And under other conditions I should enjoy them much. But I want to get home to-night. We will, however, have some luncheon and a bottle of wine. And I hope you will join me over the wine," said Mr. Lytton.

"That will I, with pleasure. For I have lots of news to hear, no doubt, and also some to tell."

"Ah!" smiled the old gentleman a little sarcastically—"news to tell!—as to whose cow has calved, whose pig has died, and so forth."

"Nothing of the sort to tell, though plenty of the sort has happened. No; but really the village has had a sensation."

"You don't say so. Some woman has twins?"

"No, I say! Let me order your luncheon, and then I'll come back and tell you all about it," said the landlord, as he hurried out of the parlor.

"The greatest gossip in the commonwealth, my dears, is our old Hezzy Greenfield. Hezekiah his name is," explained Mr. Lytton.

In a few minutes a waiter entered and set the table for luncheon, and spread upon it bread, butter and cheese,

cold meats, pastry, fruits and cakes, with a pitcher of milk and a bottle of light wine.

"Now sit down, Greenfield; sit down and join us. I want you to begin at once, and tell us what is the nature of the village sensation," said Mr. Lytton, cordially.

"Yesterday morning," said Hezekiah Greenfield, "our little community was somewhat startled by the sudden arrival of Governor Cavendish's traveling carriage, with the news that it had been sent to meet his excellency, who had telegraphed to his people at Blue Cliff Hall that he would reach Wendover by the afternoon tr n."

"Not much in that to startle any community, I think," said Mr. Lytton, smiling.

"No; but when the governor telegraphs suddenly that he is coming down, some five or six weeks before his usual time, to a little hamlet like ours, where every event out of routine is a subject of wonder, you will understand it. Well, he and his family came on the train by which he was expected, and after dining here, got into the traveling carriage, and went home to Cliff Hall."

"Nothing very surprising in that."

"No; that was only the beginning. Now listen! Remember, the governor passed through here, on his way home, yesterday afternoon."

"Yes."

"And of course he had gone home to stay until the meeting of the legislature should call him to town again. And one would judge, too, that he would be pretty tired of his journey, and willing to rest a bit. Nevertheless, at half-past eleven o'clock last night, we were all roused up out of our beds by the arrival of Governor Cavendish, to meet the midnight train to the city."

"Indeed."

"There! I knew I should surprise you at last. Yes, indeed. First he went to the telegraph office. Of course the operators had gone; but he left in the night box a sealed telegram, to be dispatched at the earliest possible

moment in the morning. Nobody on earth knew what was in the telegram, or where it was to be sent, except the operator, and he won't tell. All the satisfaction he gives a body is, that maybe we may know something more about it when the evening's mail comes down from the city."

"Some political move, I suppose," said old Mr. Lytton, who was fast losing his interest in the case.

"If you had seen his face, you would have thought it was something more than politics that troubled him," said Greenfield.

Never guessing that he had the slightest interest at stake in the troubles of Governor Cavendish, the old gentleman turned the conversation by saying to his grandson:

"Alden, my boy, while we wait here, I wish you would step over to the post office—it is just across the street—and inquire if there are any letters or papers for me. You would never believe it, but this is the nearest post office to Lytton Lodge, my lad. And you'll think yourself out of the world, when you get so far away from—from anywhere."

Alden laughed, said he thought he could stand it, took up his hat and went his errand.

He soon came back, bringing letters and papers.

Mr. Lytton looked over his letters first. Upon one of them he paused in deep thought. Then, raising his head, he said to the landlord:

"Mr. Greenfield, I think we shall have to remain here to-night, if you can accommodate us."

"Why, of course I can. Why not?"

"This letter that I hold in my hands is from my factor in Baltimore. It is dated two days ago, but in it he promises to write to me the next day—that was yesterday. I shall wait here to get his letter, which will probably come to-morrow morning. That will save a day, as I can answer it and mail the letter before we go home."

"All right. I am sure I am very glad to have you,"

said the landlord, who immediately left the parlor to order rooms prepared for his new guests.

The evening train came in and brought the city's morning papers. And these papers were diligently searched by the villagers for some item that might explain the strange move of their governor. But though they found rather more than usual of sensational, political and polite news, they found nothing particularly connected with the governor, except perhaps the article reminding the public of what they were not likely to forget—that his excellency having refused to commute the sentence of Victor Hartman, the condemned man would suffer the extreme penalty of the law that day at noon.

Mr. Lytton read that item with a sigh of sorrow given to the memory of his murdered son, and of pity and forgiveness for the doomed murderer.

"Heaven have mercy upon him!"

CHAPTER VIII

A TELEGRAM

His last hour had come. All the visitors that business or curiosity had brought to his cell that fatal morning had gone—some to secure stands near the scaffold which had been erected in the prison yard, where the execution was to take place.

Victor Hartman was alone with his spiritual guide. He had requested to be taken out soon after eleven o'clock, as he said he had something he wished to say to the people before he should die.

It was now a few minutes after eleven, and he was in momentary expectation of the sheriff and his officers.

"Is there any last word you have to say to me in private, Hartman, before they come for you? Is there any

commission you can give me to do for you?" kindly inquired the Rev. Mr. Lyle, as he sat beside the prisoner on the edge of the cot bedstead.

"No, sir; you have done all you could for my soul by your instructions and prayers; and you have done all you could for my poor body by giving me a clean shirt and a decent suit of clothes to die in. I thank you, sir. I would bless you, if the blessing of such a wretch as I could serve you. You will go out with me, and see the last of me?"

"Yes, of course! I promise that. Besides, it is our duty, and we always do it. Here they come," said Mr. Lyle, as a little procession of four men approached the cell door. One of them opened it, and all entered.

The sheriff, a grave, middle-aged man, held a parchment in his hand, and addressed the prisoner, saying:

"Victor Hartman, it is my painful duty to read your death warrant to you. Are you ready to hear it?"

"Yes, sir," meekly replied the doomed boy.

The sheriff unrolled the parchment, and read the death warrant through to its signature—"Charles Cavendish, Governor of ——."

"Now, Hartman, you see what we have to do," said the sheriff.

"Yes, sir," assented the prisoner. "And I am ready."

The sheriff made a sign to two of the officers who accompanied him, and they went and took the handcuffs off the condemned. And then they would have taken his arms to lead him forth to execution between them. But the Rev. Mr. Lyle said:

"Let me walk with him. He will be perfectly secure."

The sheriff assented with a silent bow. And Mr. Lyle drew the boy's arm within his own.

And the mournful little procession was formed—the sheriff of the county and the warden of the prison walking first, the prisoner attended by the clergyman next, and two officers of the prison behind.

As they emerged from the building into the yard, Victor

Hartman raised his despairing eyes to look for the last time upon the world from which he was about to be cast forth in ignominy.

The tender, bright-blue sky of May was over all. A thin, silvery-white cloud passing before the face of the sun softened the splendor of his rays. The trees upon the sidewalks and in the city gardens wore their freshest and tenderest green foliage. And among their branches the birds were singing blithely, filling all the sunny air with rapturous music. It seemed hard to die, in any way, upon a day like this. But to die as he was doomed to die! A shudder passed through his slight frame, and gave the reporters, who stood with pencil and notebook in hand, an item to the effect that the prisoner seemed much agitated when he was led out. He dropped his glance from the blue skies and verdant trees, and saw under them and around himself a fearful contrast.

The scaffold was erected in the corner of the prison backyard, with a temporary railing around its foot, guarded by a detachment of policemen. The yard itself was half filled with a crowd of well-dressed men, invited to be spectators of the "private" execution. The stone fence of the yard, the tops of the sheds, the roofs of the houses and the windows of their upper stories were all laden and crowded with people, and more than ten thousand pairs of eyes were eagerly fixed upon the prisoner.

Victor Hartman shuddered and dropped his eyes again.

"Do not look upon them, my dear boy. Do not think of them. Think of the Redeemer's words: 'Verily, I say unto you, this day——' You know the rest. Repeat them to yourself, Hartman," whispered Mr. Lyle, as they approached the foot of the scaffold stairs.

The sheriff and the warden went up first. The man and the condemned man followed.

At a sign from the sheriff, two officers came forward to pinion the prisoner.

And how many that had looked on the proceedings up

to this point with hard eyes, turned away their heads. Some even ran in at the open doors of the prison to get out of the way of witnessing the execution.

These ran against an officer of the jail who was hurrying through from the front or street door of the building to the back door leading into the yard, where the execution was proceeding to its final act. He was very much excited, and bursting through the opposing crowd, he waved a white cloth to attract instant attention, and shouted:

"Stop! stop!—for the Lord's sake, stop!"

And, breathless with excitement, he ran up the stairs of the scaffold, and thrust a folded paper into the hands of the sheriff.

The officer made a sign to his assistants to stay proceedings, while he opened and read the paper. He stared at it for a few moments in silent surprise, while the assembled spectators on their part stared at him in anxious expectation.

Then he raised his voice, and said:

"The condemned man is respited for one week, by order of the governor."

There was a short pause, and then a loud and joyous cheer arose from the crowd. They had come to see the spectacle of Victor Hartman's execution with anticipation of satisfaction; but to the credit of their human nature be it written, they heard of his respite with rejoicing.

"The prisoner has fainted dead away, sir," said one of the sheriff's officers, as he supported the almost lifeless form of the reprieved criminal.

The sheriff turned around to examine the subject of these words.

"The shock has been too much for the poor fellow. He was prepared for immediate death, not for a reprieve," he said.

"This reprieve at this moment is almost cruel unless followed up by a commutation of his sentence," sighed

the clergyman, as he rubbed the pulseless hands of the unconscious man.

"Smith and Martin, lift him between you and bear him back to the cell," said the sheriff, addressing his two officers.

They raised the light form of the poor wretch, and carefully carried him down from the scaffold, and through the cheering crowd that filled the prison yard, and so conveyed him back to his cell and laid him on his cot bedstead. And there he lay, more dead than alive, having suffered all the bitterness of death without attaining its repose.

He was slowly returning to consciousness and to pain. He opened his eyes and rolled them around the walls of his cell with a look of dull surprise.

The Rev. Mr. Lyle bent over him, laid a hand upon his forehead, tried to catch the gaze of his wandering eyes and gently spoke:

"Hartman, my poor boy, how is it with you?"

"I don't know. I thought it was all over with me," slowly answered the young prisoner, with the same look of dull surprise.

"Do you know where you are, Hartman?"

"I ought to, but I'm not sure. I thought it was all over with me. Why isn't it?" murmured the prisoner confusedly, as he passed his hand over his eyes, and then lifted them wildly to the face of his reverend friend.

"Hartman, don't you know that you were reprieved on the scaffold?" inquired the clergyman, who began to fear for the reason of the sufferer.

"Reprieved? I thought I was—I thought something else had happened. Reprieved, you say?" inquired the prisoner, as an expression of strangely blended joy, pain and perplexity convulsed his pallid features.

"Yes, Hartman. Almost at the last moment, when you were about to die, you were reprieved, and you fainted. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, now I do. Reprieved? Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed the poor wretch, bursting into tears and sobbing as if his heart would break.

"This is cruel, unless this reprieve is to be followed up by a commutation of the sentence," muttered the clergyman, apart to the sheriff.

"It probably will end in a commutation," replied that officer.

Hartman, with closed eyes and folded hands, was evidently returning thanks for his respite from death. Soon he raised those wild, dark orbs to the face of the sheriff and asked:

"Who, sir, besides the Lord, have I to thank for this undeserved mercy?"

"I do not know, Hartman, unless it be the governor himself."

"The governor would never of himself have granted me a respite."

"He may have been moved by the letters of your anonymous advocate," suggested Mr. Lyle.

"He was said to have been moved by them, indeed, but only to scorn and anger. No; it could not have been the influence of those letters that gained my respite."

"Hartman," inquired the sheriff, "have you any knowledge of the writer of those letters?"

"Sir," replied the prisoner solemnly, "I tell you now, what I told Mr. Lyle, even when death was staring me in the face, that I not only have no knowledge, but that I have not the least suspicion of who the writer of those letters can possibly be."

"It is very strange."

"And why any man should persist in writing and declaring that I did not kill Mr. Lytton, when I knew perfectly well and confess perfectly freely that I did kill him —though unintentionally—I cannot imagine," added Hartman, with a look of profound perplexity.

"Nor can I. It is a mystery that time only can eluci-

date, if even time can do it," mused the clergyman, reflectively.

"And, taken in connection with the governor's suspected action in granting this respite at the last moment, the mystery grows deeper," muttered the sheriff.

These last words between the two gentlemen were spoken in a low tone, and somewhat apart from the prisoner.

And they were now interrupted by the opening of the cell door and the appearance of the turnkey, who put a letter in the hands of the sheriff.

The latter opened and read the missive, and then left the cell, signing for the clergyman to follow him.

Mr. Lyle paused only long enough to shake hands with the prisoner and take leave of him, with the promise to return the next day. And then he joined the sheriff, whom he found walking up and down the hall with the open letter in his hand.

"Mr. Lyle, you must know that the telegram that respited the prisoner and surprised us so much this morning, came from Wendover, the nearest telegraph station to Blue Cliffs, the country seat of the governor."

"Yes."

"Well, this note informs me that the governor has just arrived in town, and has sent for me to meet him immediately at the executive mansion. I think this summons is connected with Victor Hartman's fate, and that I may have news to tell you on my return. I only waited to say this to you. And now I am going right off."

"I truly hope it may be so. Without any of that dangerous, morbid sympathy with criminals that is much too prevalent in this age, I certainly feel deeply interested in this poor boy, and earnestly wish that his life might be spared for better things," said Mr. Lyle.

"We cannot expect anything better than a commutation of his sentence from death to perpetual imprisonment," replied the sheriff.

"Well, even in a prison a repentant man may do much to redeem his past life," concluded the clergyman.

And then the two gentlemen left the place together, the one to wait on the governor at the executive mansion and the other to return to his own house.

CHAPTER IX

PARDONED

THE crowd that had come to witness the execution of Victor Hartman, and had gazed upon the pallid complexion, the emaciated form and the despairing eyes of the doomed boy, and had heard his pathetic, self-accusation, cheered when the unexpected reprieve by telegram delivered him from immediate death.

But as they dispersed and spread the news of the respite through the city, they were met by murmurings of surprise and disapprobation.

The general public had never looked upon the condemned boy, and felt no pity for him. But they had heard or read all about his crime, and they thought he ought to have been punished with the utmost rigor of the law, and promptly, too.

Through the murmuring city the sheriff took his way to the executive mansion.

The house itself wore a deserted aspect. The window shutters were all closed, and dust had gathered thickly upon the portico.

The front door was opened to the visitor, not by the smart footman in livery that usually attended there, but the red-headed and bare-footed boy, Tim Dooley, son of the widow who in the absence of the family took care of the house.

"Where is the governor?" inquired the sheriff.

"In's office. I'll show yer," answered the boy, closing and carefully locking the front door, and then walking before the visitor to lead him to the presence of the governor.

The sheriff found Governor Cavendish in the large back room that opened upon the garden, and was used as library, study and executive chamber.

When the lad had retired the governor, whose manner was somewhat distracted, pointed to a chair and said:

"Pray sit down, Mr. Middleton. I sent for you on business."

The sheriff took a chair, dusted it off carefully with his pocket handkerchief, seated himself, and then said:

"I hope I find your excellency well this morning?"

"Yes," said the governor, absently.

And his visitor waited for him to explain the object for which he had summoned him.

"I relieved you of a very painful duty this morning, Mr. Sheriff," at length said the governor.

"Yes, sir, and I was very happy to be so relieved," answered the sheriff.

"Yet I believe that my course has given very great dissatisfaction to the public mind. Is it not so? You have been out in the city and can tell me. Speak plainly."

"Well, then, your excellency, I regret very much to say that your clemency has given much more offense to the community than such a simple act as the respite of a condemned criminal for one short week could possibly justify."

"Yes; but you see, Mr. Middleton, that the condemned boy has no friends, while the murdered lawyer was about the most popular man in the city."

"I know that, sir."

"Consequently you see that even so much mercy, or rather so little mercy, as may be found in a week's respite from death, of Lytton's supposed murderer, would give great offense."

"Supposed murderer, your excellency!" exclaimed the sheriff, in surprise.

"Supposed murderer," repeated the governor, emphatically. "How do we know that he is the real murderer? Granted that he confesses himself to be such. Men have before now confessed crimes that they never committed."

"Your excellency has been influenced by those anonymous letters that have been written to you, insisting on the condemned man's innocence."

"Not in the least degree. I quite despised those weak devices. Yet I repeat to you that the greatest proof we have of Hartman's guilt is his own confession. And men have before now voluntarily confessed crimes they never committed. Read some of the last chapters in 'Russel on Crime.' It would open your eyes, I think. But enough of this. I come back to the subject of the great offense the community have received at my act of this morning. I presume there was not an individual, with the exception of the reprieved man himself, who did not condemn my course?"

"Pardon me, your excellency. There were some humble individuals—the clergyman who attended Hartman, the officers of the prison, and myself among the number—who sincerely rejoiced in the respite of Hartman. Even the crowd assembled to see him executed heartily cheered at his reprieve, though many of the latter may have changed their minds after reading the afternoon's papers."

"I think that quite likely. There was a great deal of vim in those leaders. However, I am grateful to the few who felt with me in this matter, especially as that unpopular act is to be supplemented by a still more unpopular one, the respite is to be followed up by a——"

The governor paused, and looked wistfully at his visitor.

"Commutation of his sentence?" added the latter, finishing the interrupted words.

"By a full pardon," continued the speaker, looking straight in the face of his hearer.

The sheriff stood aghast.

"Governor Cavendish, it will be the most unpopular act of your whole administration!" he said.

"The act of pardoning Hartman will bring political ruin on my head. That I have made up my mind to meet. But I fear it may bring disaster also on the head of the man I would save; for if he should be pardoned and released from prison in the open day, in the present excited state of the public feeling, he would fall a victim to mob violence, and suffer some death more cruel than protracted than hanging. It is about this that I wished to speak to you. The pardon is made out and signed. Here it is. But I do not wish you to act upon it until night, nor to let it be publicly known until to-morrow morning. Discharge the prisoner from custody to-night. And tell him of the state of the public feeling, and the danger he would incur by remaining in the city; and advise him to quit it to-night, so as to be far away before to-morrow, when the fact of the pardon shall be publicly made known, and when, should he be found here, his person would be in imminent peril."

And here the governor placed a rolled parchment in the hands of the sheriff, and arose from his seat and stood with his hands on the back of the chair, as if waiting for the departure of his visitor.

Sheriff Middleton, in much surprise and perplexity of mind, received the document and took leave of the governor.

When sheriff and clergyman broke the news to the boy that he was free, his joy knew no bounds.

He could hardly realize that the prison doors were open; but when Mr. Lyle pointed out the danger that lay in delay —for already rumors of lynching were afloat—Victor controlled himself and walked out between the two men.

A few blocks from the jail the sheriff took a final leave of the liberated prisoner, and then bade good-night to the clergyman, and went his way.

"I will go on with you a little further," said Mr. Lyle, as he continued to walk beside Victor Hartman. "And now tell me, my poor boy, what you really intend to do with yourself," he added, kindly.

"I am going first of all to my mother's and father's graves, to take a last leave of them. I shall try to work my way to the nearest seaport, and go as a common sailor aboard some ship bound for California. I shall only engage for the voyage out, as I wish to get to the gold fields again."

"And now, Hartman, what means have you for your journey?"

"None whatever, sir. But I calculate to work my way to the seaport, and then work my passage out to California."

"We thought as much," said the minister, compassionately, as he drew an old *porte-monnaie* from his pocket and put it into the hands of the young man, adding: "The sheriff, the warden and myself have made you up a little purse to help you on your way. It is not much; only fifteen dollars."

"I thank you and them, sir, very much. It will be enough to take me to New York. From that port I shall easily get a berth on board some ship bound for California. I take this gratefully as a gift now, to be returned as a loan tenfold, if I succeed."

Then, with renewed expressions of good will from the minister and of gratitude from the released prisoner, the two parted.

The traveler, left alone, went on his solitary way. The road presently entered a thick wood, lying about three miles east of the city. It was now nearly midnight. There was not a living creature to be seen. Under his feet was a grassy bridle path, crossed here and there with little pebbly brooks; on each side of him thick trees; over his head the starlit sky. It was a very solitary, but very soothing scene.

Suddenly the traveler was startled by the thunder of a horse's hoofs galloping behind him.

He drew to the right side of the road to let the rider pass.

But in another instant the horseman suddenly drew up before him, leaned over his saddle, and called in a whisper:

"Victor Hartman!"

"Yes! Who wants me?" impulsively answered the young man, who, nevertheless, the next moment regretted his indiscretion in answering to his name at all; for he rapidly thought this man might be the leader of a mob who had somehow gained intelligence of his pardon and liberation, and had come to lynch him.

He withdrew a little from the horseman, and resolved, on the slightest appearance of danger, to plunge into the thick wood, where certainly the pursuer could not follow him.

"Don't be shy of me, man! I am not a law officer in pursuit of you; and if I were, you are not a fugitive from justice. Dash it, no! A fugitive from injustice, I should say. Come here!" said the stranger.

Reassured by the tone of the speaker, Victor Hartman went to his side, feeling now only curiosity to know who he was, and what he wanted.

"Hartman, you never intended to kill Lytton, did you?" inquired the stranger.

"No, as Heaven is my witness, I never did! That is the only thought that saves me from insanity, the only comfort I have in this world," said Hartman, earnestly.

"Take another comfort, then: You never did kill him!"

"What!"

"You never intended to kill him, and you never did kill him. Somebody else intended to kill him, and somebody else killed him!"

"What is this you are telling me? I know better! Are you mad?"

"I am telling you the truth. I know even better than you do. I am not mad."

"Who are you?"

"Never mind. Here, hold out your hand."

In amazement, Victor Hartman held out his hand.

The stranger dropped a small, heavy packet into it, saying:

"There! There are two hundred dollars in gold eagles. Take them. They are your right. Go to California, or —to the other place! But go with a clear conscience, for you are guiltless."

And with that, quick as lightning he wheeled his horse.

"But who are you, that come to me with such strange words, and——" began the bewildered traveler; but before he could finish his sentence the mysterious horseman had thundered out of sight and hearing, leaving Victor Hartman alone in the wood, with his hands full of gold!

CHAPTER X

A SENSATION AT WENDOVER

"By this morning's papers we shall get a full account of the execution of Victor Hartman," said the landlord of the Reindeer, to his circle of customers who had come into the barroom to get their morning mint juleps, while waiting for the arrival of the mail train.

But the sensation-loving visitors were doomed to disappointment.

The morning mail brought the papers, indeed, but they contained no account of the execution of Victor Hartman.

On the contrary, they announced the astounding news of his full pardon, accompanied by the severest censure of the course of the governor.

When old Mr. Lytton came downstairs he found the

public room full of men who, with the papers in their hands, were criticizing the course of the executive. They could not see why the governor should have pardoned Victor Hartman, and they were talking over the affair in great excitement—naturally also connecting it with the sudden night journey of his excellency.

Apart from all the others stood Alden Lytton, looking so grim, pale and resolved, that his grandfather at once spoke to him, inquiring:

"What is it, my lad?"

"Governor Cavendish—may the Lord judge him for the outrage!—has pardoned the murderer of my father, but I vow, by all I hold sacred on earth and in heaven, to devote my whole life to avenge his death upon his destroyer!" said Alden, grinding the words from between his teeth, as he turned perfectly livid with rage.

"Alden! Alden, my boy! pray against such a spirit as that, for such a spirit tempts to murder!" replied the old man, seriously.

And the men who were discussing the news, seeing the man who might be supposed to be the most interested in it, crowded around him with words of condolence.

"It was shameful," they said; "it was abominable; it was unpardonable in Governor Cavendish."

"My old friends," answered Able Lytton, gravely, "I thank you very much for your expressions of sympathy. But I differ with you in regard to your judgment of the governor. I have myself that confidence in Charles Cavendish, that I do not believe he would do anything dishonorable. As he has fully pardoned this young man, there is no doubt that he had good and sufficient reasons for doing so—reasons which we shall know in time. As for myself, I am well pleased that the criminal has his life given him for repentance and amendment. His execution could not have restored the dead to life, nor comforted the living for death."

And, so saying, the old man passed out of the room,

leaving his hearers in astonishment, and in some division of opinion as to himself.

"There goes a good Christian," said one.

"I call him an unnatural father," said another.

"Here's a youth that don't sympathize with his grandfather's sentiments, at least," said a third, pointing to Alden Lytton, who stood there with his eyes gleaming like fireballs from his marble-white face.

"No, I don't! And henceforth I devote my life to the punishment of my father's murderer, and the avengement of my father's death!" spoke Alden between his clenched teeth.

"Good for you!" said number one.

"Bully boy!" exclaimed number two.

"Spoken like a man," added number three.

And so they all encouraged the youth in his revengeful passions.

In the meantime old Mr. Lytton went across the street to the post office, where he found the letter that he was waiting for.

He returned with it open in his hands. He looked grave and anxious.

"I hope you have no bad news there, sir," said Alden, meeting him at the door.

"It is not good news, at least, my boy. But let us go in to breakfast. We must not keep Laura waiting."

They joined Laura at the breakfast table that had been laid for the three. But the old man could eat but little. Both his young people saw that something unusual had occurred to disturb him.

After breakfast he told them to go out and take a walk, as he himself had some letters to write.

"How long may we walk, grandpa? The mountain scenery is very beautiful here; but we would not like to be beguiled by it into keeping you waiting for us," said Laura.

Mr. Lytton put his hand to his head, in a bewildered

manner, seemed to try to collect his absent thoughts, and then inquired:

"What did you say, my dear?"

"When shall we come back, grandpa?" inquired Laura, varying the form of the question.

"Oh, come back to an early dinner—two o'clock. I shall not be ready to continue our journey until after that," he answered, still with an air of abstraction.

The youth and maiden went out for their walk, strolled far into the fastnesses of the mountain, collected interesting mineralogical and botanical specimens, and when the sun had just passed his meridian point, discovered that they were in danger of overstaying their time, and then hastened back to the hotel.

"It is a quarter-past two!" exclaimed Alden, in vexation, as he glanced at the parlor clock.

"Grandpa will have been waiting for us. I must run and tell him that we are here," added Laura, hurrying up the steps and into the old man's room.

CHAPTER XI

A SHOCK

THE next moment a piercing shriek from Laura brought Alden running into the chamber, followed by the landlord, landlady, waiter and chambermaid.

They found old Able Lytton sitting back in his arm-chair, white and stiff as a statue, or a corpse; and Laura down on her knees before him, rubbing his hands, and calling wildly on his name.

"Oh, what is the matter with him? what?" she cried, rising to her feet and appealing to the newcomers.

They drew near in awe.

"When I came in and saw him sitting so still I thought

he was asleep. I called him, but he did not answer. I took up his hand and it was deadly cold. And see! when I let it go, it falls from mine like lead! Oh, see!" she said, and she raised the old man's hand and let it drop a dead weight.

The landlord came and felt his pulse, and examined his eyes, and listened at his mouth, and then, looking up with a sigh, exclaimed:

"I'm afraid he's gone!"

"Gone?" wildly inquired Laura.

"He's dead," said the landlord.

"Oh, no! oh, no! not dead! not dead! don't say that! It's only a fit, maybe! Oh, send for the doctor!" exclaimed Laura, throwing herself again upon her knees before the corpse, and beginning eagerly to rub its fast-stiffening hands.

"Yes, the doctor ought to be sent for, certainly," said the landlady.

"Where can I find one?" hastily inquired Alden, who had not spoken until now, but had remained gazing in silent grief and awe upon the lifelike corpse.

"At the east end of this street—Dr. Hamilton. You will see his sign," answered the landlord.

And Alden seized his hat and ran out.

"Is there any hope? any hope?" piteously demanded Laura, looking from the landlord to the landlady.

"I'm afraid not, miss," said the landlord.

"But the doctor?"

"Oh, he can't do anything, honey! Only, he ought to be sent for whether or no, and the coroner, too, for anything I can see," said the landlady.

"The coroner?" echoed Laura, with a shudder, as she was reminded of the inquest on her father's dead body, and she rubbed the cold hands more zealously than before, as if she tried to rub them back to life. "The coroner, did you say? Oh! I hope not!"

"Well, honey, we'll see what the doctor says about it

when he comes. It will be for him to decide in this case whether an inquest will be necessary."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" wept Laura, still rubbing away with all her might.

"It's no use to keep on tiring of yourself over them dead hands, honey; for you might's well try to rub life into a stone statty," said Mrs. Greenfield.

"Oh, grandpa! dear grandpa! dear, good, gentle grandpa! Only friend! Oh! oh! oh!" wept Laura without control.

In the midst of her weeping Alden returned and entered the room, followed by the doctor, who came hurrying up to the side of the dead man, asking many questions as he proceeded to examine his pulse, his chest, his eyes, etc.

"When was he attacked? Who was with him? Had he sustained any shock? Had he complained of illness previously?" etc.

He was told in reply that Mr. Lytton seemed perfectly well when he arose in the morning; that he had received letters from the post office which so discomposed him as to prevent him from eating breakfast with his usual appetite; that he had retired to his room to answer letters, and had sent his young people out for a ramble over the mountain; that at two o'clock Miss Laura Lytton, having returned to the house with her brother, Mr. Alden, went to the room of her grandfather to call him to dinner; and that she found him in this condition, and immediately gave the alarm.

"It is a plain case of apoplexy," said the doctor, after he had completed his examination.

"Will there have to be a coroner's 'quest? that's what I want to know," inquired the landlord.

"Not at all. It is a perfectly natural death. The old gentleman has died of apoplexy. I will give a certificate to that effect."

"Oh, thank Heaven, that horror is spared us, at least!" fervently breathed poor Laura.

"My Uncle Lytton should be informed of this at once," said Alden, who immediately saw that it was his duty to take upon himself the conduct of affairs. "Can you, Mr. Greenfield, send a messenger on horseback at once, to take a note that I shall write to my uncle?"

"Certainly, Mr. Alden. I'll go now," said the landlord.

"And will you, Dr. Hamilton, kindly call on the undertaker, as you return, and send him here for orders?" inquired Alden, appealing to the physician.

"Willingly, my dear sir. You and your sister shall have my best services," said the doctor, taking up his hat.

Alden sat down at the very desk where his grandfather's unfinished letters lay, and wrote a note to his Uncle Lytton, informing him of the sudden death of his father at the Reindeer Hotel, Wendover.

Three hours later Mr. John Lytton, the elder, and now only surviving son of the deceased, arrived at the Reindeer.

Alden and Laura were called to receive him.

They hurried downstairs, anxious to meet the uncle, their father's elder and only brother, and now their own sole guardian, but whom they had never seen before.

They found him in the public parlor. But, oh! what a contrast to their father and their grandfather! He seemed scarcely of the same race.

Their grandfather was a stately old gentleman, with silver hair and clear complexion, neat in his dress and polite in his address.

Their dark-haired father was a model of manly beauty, grace and dignity.

This man was tall, long-limbed, awkward and uncouth in form, with coarse features, tanned and freckled face, rough red hair and stubbly beard.

Could this possibly be their uncle?

They doubted it, until he came forward, holding out both hands, and calling out in a big, hearty voice:

"How d'ye do? How d'ye do? Fine young people!

Pale, though. That will never do. Put some color into your cheeks when we get you to the farm, feeding the chickens and milking the cows, eh?"

"Oh, Uncle John! grandpa—poor, dear grandpa!" cried Laura, bursting into tears.

"Yes, I know. Don't cry. It can't be helped, you know. Just what might have been expected. Over seventy. Dear me, yes! There, now, don't cry any more," said "Uncle John," brushing the tears from his own eyes, as his voice broke down with emotion.

"He is not so heartless as I thought, after all," said Laura to herself, as she wiped her eyes, and raised her head to receive the kiss this awkward and ignorant giant was offering her.

"Ah, you're like your father, my dear; but he and me never was a bit alike. He took after the old man. The old man was college bred, you know—a graduate of William and Mary, Williamsburg. But things went wrong with the farm, and when Harry and me grew up, there wa'nt money enough to send both of us to college; so, as I was the oldest and would have the farm, the old man he sent Harry to college, and gave him a profession. So, you see, that's the reason why your father was a scholar and a fine gentleman, and your uncle is only a plain country farmer."

"Did you want to go to college also when you were young, uncle?" inquired Laura, with much sympathy in her eyes and voice, for she thought what a pity it was that this man should have grown up in ignorance.

"Me! Bless you, no! And there was another difference between me and him. He took after the old man, and loved larning; I took after the old woman, who never read anything but the Bible and the cookery book. Nature's nature all over the world. So I'm not a city-bred scholar like your father, and you'll find me rough. But I'll tell you what it is. I'm John Lytton, your uncle. I'm Harry's brother. And just so long as John Lytton's

got a shed over his head, or a crust in his cupboard, Harry's children are welcome to share it with him and his. And now, Alden, boy, show me what's left of the old man," said "Uncle John," brushing his cuff across his eyes.

Alden arose to lead the way to the room of death.

Laura raised and kissed the rugged hand that was held out to her, and the three went upstairs together.

The son bent over the dead body of the father with a grave, sorrowful countenance. Then he covered up the cold face and turned away.

"Where is that letter, Alden, that was thought to have excited the old man so much?" inquired "Uncle John," turning to his nephew.

"Here, uncle. I put the letter and the half-finished answer both into this envelope," answered the boy, handing a paper parcel to John Lytton.

The farmer sat down and read the letter and its half-finished answer, and then said:

"Yes, this is ill news, but not so bad as to have hastened the old man's death, nor do I believe that it did it. It only means that we shall have to sell another slice off the land, boy, in order to lift the mortgage off the house. It's been going, little by little, this long time; so that I've left off calling of it a plantation, and have taken to calling of it a farm. Goodness knows whether there'll be as much as a market garden of it left by the time I'm ready to leave it to my son. I reckon by that time Charles Cavendish will ha' got the last of it, as he's got the fust."

"Was Governor Cavendish the purchaser, sir?" inquired Alden.

"Ay, lad! He buys all the land that comes into the market adjacent to his own. They do say that some of it he helps into the market o' purpose that he may buy it. He has a 'land hunger,' he has; so I guess in time his daughter Emma will be about the wealthiest landholder in the State."

"Is Miss Emma his only child, then?"

"Yes, his only child and heiress She'll be a spec some o' these days, you bet. Well, Laura, my good girl, be a little woman now, and go and see the landlady, and ask her if she can prepare two bedrooms—one for the old woman, and one for my wife Kitty. They'll be here in the gig to-night."

Laura left her uncle and her brother together in the death chamber, and went in search of Mrs. Greenfield, whom she found busy with her domestic affairs below stairs.

"So the widow and her daughter-in-law are coming to-night, are they, honey?" said the landlady, when she had heard Laura's story. "Well, there's no one stopping here now but yourselves, so you see there's plenty of empty bedrooms, and you may choose any two you like for your grandmother and your aunt. Come along."

And so the landlady led Laura all over the house. And the young girl selected two pleasant front rooms on the first floor, with windows commanding a fine mountain view.

Between sunset and dark that evening a large, old-fashioned gig, containing two women, drew up before the door.

The younger one, who drove the gig, alighted and handed out the elder. And then the two women, leaving the gig and horse in charge of the hostler and stable boy, entered the hotel.

John Lytton, with Alden and Laura, were at the door waiting to receive them.

"Now, brace up! brace up like a woman, mother!" said John, as the old lady dropped her head upon his shoulder and burst into tears.

"Oh! it's so sudden, John! It's so awful sudden!" sobbed the widow.

"I know it is; but then the suddenness had its advantages, too. It saved him from sickness and pain. So long

as he had to go to-day, an't you better satisfied that he enjoyed his life and health up to the last minute, and then went off in this easy way?"

"Well, yes; I suppose I ought to be; but it's such a shock!"

"So it is. But now here are Alden and Laura, who are going to be a comfort to you. Speak to them."

The old lady lifted her head from his bosom, and gave her hand first to Laura, and then to Alden, saying:

"Poor children! How you've growed, to be sure! It's more'n five years since I've seen you. I've growed, too, 's well as you; but the difference is, you've growed up, and I've growed down, or growed old, which is the same thing."

While the widow was renewing her acquaintance with her grandchildren, John Lytton was speaking apart with his wife.

"Yes, Kitty; that's so, old girl! The man won't renew, so there's nothing else for me to do but to follow the example of my father and grandfather before me, and enter upon my inheritance by the forced sale of a good part of it. Never mind! Here, speak to Laura and Alden. They are to live long of us, poor children."

Mrs. John Lytton kissed her niece and nephew, and cried a little over them.

And then, leaving Alden in company with his Uncle John, Laura took the two women up to their rooms.

And there, while they laid off their bonnets and shawls, Laura for the first time got a good look at them.

Mrs. Lytton the elder was a woman of about sixty-five years of age, very fair, very fat, with blue eyes and gray hair. She was very commonly dressed, in a light calico gown, white muslin cap, straw bonnet and brown shawl.

Mrs. Lytton, the younger, was about thirty-five years old, a tall, well-formed woman, rather thin in flesh, with rich black hair and fine dark eyes. She wore a rusty black silk dress and mantle, and a straw bonnet, with a green barege veil.

Laura thought her new relations were very ordinary-looking people, indeed. And then she blamed herself for thinking so, and redoubled her attentions to them.

The weather was very warm. The distance to Lytton Lodge was long. The parish church and churchyard, and the family graves, were all here at Wendover. Here, too, was the undertaker, who could get up the funeral, the mourning and all things needful for the occasion, on a short notice. So, after due consideration, it was decided that the funeral should take place at Wendover church on the third day from the death of the old man.

In pursuance of this plan on the Saturday afternoon following, the remains of old Able Lytton were laid in the grave.

On the afternoon of the same day the family pursued their homeward journey to Lytton Lodge.

CHAPTER XII

AT LYTTON LODGE

A VERY pleasant road, through a deeply wooded vale, lying between two lofty mountain ridges, led from the village of Wendover to Lytton Lodge.

Our party traveled in the large, old family carriole, or "carryall," as they called it, which would comfortably seat six persons, though there were but five now, even counting the driver, who was no other than John Lytton himself.

The sun was scarcely an hour high when they turned out of the public highway into a private road leading first through pine woods, then through wheat fields, then through apple and peach orchards, and finally through a thickly shaded yard up to a long, low, steep-roofed, old-fashioned house, with many outhouses clustered about it,

from which issued negro men and women, negro boys and girls and babies, and any number of dogs.

On the threshold of the house they were met by a very large, fat old lady—so large and fat that she might have been taken for the proverbial alderman, in "female apparel."

"Ah, Molly! how do, old girl?" called John, in his big voice, as he heartily shook hands with the fat woman. Then, turning to his niece and nephew, he explained: "This is my sister-in-law, Miss Molly Moss. Molly, these are Harry's children, you know. Shake hands with them."

Miss Molly put out two fat hands and grasped and shook those of Laura and Alden, saying kindly:

"How do? I'm glad to see you both. Used to know your father onst, when I was a young 'oman and he a young man. Come in now, and take off your things. Tea's all ready."

"Where's Charley?" inquired John.

"Oh, he's down in the wheat field, helping to stack."

"And where's Octy and Ully?"

"Oh, they're both in the garden, picking strawberries for tea. They'll be in all right by the time we're ready to sit down," said jolly Miss Molly, as she beckoned Laura to come into the best bedroom on the ground floor to take off her bonnet and wash her face and hands.

The best bedroom was very plainly furnished; the walls were whitewashed; the floor was bare; the front windows were shaded by simple blue paper blinds; the bed was covered with a blue and white checked counterpane, and adorned with pillows white as snow. A pine dressing-table was covered with a neat white cloth and surmounted by a small looking-glass in a black walnut frame, decorated with a sprig of asparagus. There was one armchair with a blue calico cover, and there were three chip-bottomed chairs and a corner washstand, with a blue basin and pitcher. That was all.

"This is our best spare room. You can take off your

things here and get ready for tea. After tea I will show you your own room. It is upstairs," said Miss Molly, hospitably.

Laura thanked the old lady, and quickly made her slight toilet. And then Miss Molly offered to show her the way to the table.

Laura followed her conductress, not into any dining room, but straight through the bare hall and out at the back door, to the grass-grown back yard, where, under the delightful shade of a wide-spreading old horse-chestnut tree the tea-table was set.

It was a large, round table, covered with a clean, coarse linen tablecloth. And besides tea it was loaded with the rustic luxuries of sweet milk, rich cream, home-made bread and cakes, fried spring chicken and strawberries and currants.

There was quite a large family party around the table —nine, I believe, in all. For there, in addition to the other members of the family, were the three children of John and Kitty Lytton; first Charley, a lank, awkward, red-headed and freckle-faced boy of seventeen, "the very image of his father," and Octavia and Ulrica, two little girls of ten and of eight years, thin, brown and black-haired like their mother.

"Come, now, sit down and make yourselves at home. And Laura, what shall I help you to, my dear?" said John Lytton, at the same time sticking his fork into half a fried chicken and transferring it to her plate, while old Mrs. Lytton filled a large cup of tea and sent it down to her by the bright-eyed, jet-black negro girl who waited on the table.

The hospitality was embarrassing. Yet Laura thought she had never in her life seen anything half so pleasant as this tea-table under the horse-chestnut tree.

"Do you always take tea out here?" she softly inquired of her next neighbor, Cousin Charley, who blushed crimson

up to the edges of his curly red hair at being addressed so suddenly by this fine city young lady.

He mumbled something in reply, of which Laura caught only the words:

"Fine weather."

"Don't be so bashful, Charley," spoke out John Lytton in his big voice. "It's your own cousin, you know, and you mustn't be 'feared of her. Yes, Laura, we always take breakfast and tea both out here in the summer time. Don't we, mother?"

"Yes, it's cooler. And it helps to keep flies out'n the house," answered the old lady, who was busily pouring out the tea.

"I think it is perfectly delightful. Don't you, Cousin Charley?" said Laura, smiling on her neighbor.

Charley smiled, flushed up, mumbled something that sounded like:

"Very much so, indeed," and wished silently that his pretty, dark-eyed city cousin would not talk to him just yet a while.

The sun set while they were at table. And when the pleasant meal was over, they all arose and strolled, in the afterglow, about the grassy yard, among the great trees; while Laura made acquaintance with her two little girl cousins, and Alden accepted a shy invitation from Charley to walk down with him to the cowpen, or "kuppin," as he called it.

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE FARM

All the summer long the family arose at dawn of day, breakfasted at sunrise, dined at noon, supped at sunset, and retired to rest soon after nightfall.

Every day the men and boys went out in the fields to

work, and the women and girls employed themselves in the house in quilting, carding, spinning, weaving or making up garments for the household.

And as long as the summer and the novelty lasted Alden and Laura were busy and happy—Alden working with his uncle in the field, and Laura helping her aunt in the house, or teaching the children.

Autumn brought some little change. The crops were all gathered into the barns. There was not much work to do in the fields.

And John Lytton often had a day's holiday, and took his son and nephew, and his dogs and gun with him, and went shooting on the mountain. And as often they returned laden with game.

These holidays were days of delight to the boys.

There were no more pleasant breakfasts and suppers under the shade of the great horse-chestnut tree.

The tree had changed its summer dress of green to an autumn dress of burning crimson and gold, and a carpet of the same hue lay around its foot.

In the house bright wood fires were burning in the wide fireplaces, and around the largest of these, in the common sitting room, the women and girls of the family were daily gathered, engaged in some domestic occupation—sewing, knitting, carding, spinning, reeling and sometimes even weaving; for at that day, in that part of the county, many domestic manufactures went on.

On some days these occupations were varied by preserving and pickling fruits and vegetables, and making cordials and catsups, when old Mrs. Lytton, notable housewife that she was, would spend the whole forenoon between her storeroom and kitchen, paring, coring, weighing, seasoning, stewing, potting and bottling, assisted by her cook Cassandra, or "Cassy," and Cassy's two pretty dusky daughters, Caroline and Amanda, otherwise "Calline" and "Mandy."

On Sundays the whole family crowded into the big car-

ryall, and went to the Wendover church, often taking luncheon with them, and staying over to the afternoon service.

On Sundays only the elder women of the family wore their neat black dresses; on all other days they wore their cheap, faded light calicoes.

Laura and Alden still made themselves very useful, so that their presence in the house was felt to be a benefit, instead of a burden.

Alden kept his uncle's accounts, which had always been a sore bother to poor John, and he helped him with any work that he had on hand.

Laura taught her ignorant little cousins the art of reading, writing and ciphering, and was looking forward to the time when she should lead them through the intricacies of grammar, geography and history.

Besides this, Laura made all old Mrs. Lytton's and Miss Molly Moss' caps, and helped Mrs. John Lytton with the Liliputian wardrobe she was preparing.

Once in a while a neighboring family would come and spend the afternoon and take an early tea with the Lyttons, and go home before night.

And occasionally the Lyttons, with Laura and Alden, would go out to return such a visit.

Were our young people happy then?

Ah, no!

Life at the farmhouse was really monotonous, and besides, they were starving for mental food.

There were no books. The Bible and the "Virginia Housewife" composed the whole library at Lytton Lodge.

There were no newspapers taken in the family since the death of old Mr. Lytton, not even the local paper, the *Wendover Watchman.*

A useless expense, and a great waste of time, John would have considered the taking and reading of a newspaper.

Laura and Alden felt not only that they were making

no progress in their education, but that they were really losing ground.

At length one day Alden said to John Lytton:

"Uncle, a school for boys is very much wanted in this neighborhood. Don't you think I might do some good, and make some money to pay my own college fees, by keeping a school this winter, while I have so little else to do?"

John Lytton looked aghast.

"Nephew," he began, with comic solemnity, "do you want to break my heart? Do you want to bring my gray hairs——"

John's hairs were as red as fire, and he was in the prime of life; nevertheless he was so affected by the picture that he drew, as to break down in the middle of his sentence and actually shed tears. Then he went off into a towering passion, and roared forth:

"No Lytton, since the world was made, ever got his living by teaching a paltry country school. And no Lytton, while the world lasts, ever shall do so with my consent. While I have a roof to shelter me, or a crust to nourish me, you shall share it! But you shall not put me to open shame by keeping of a school."

And with this he stuck his broad-brimmed hat upon his head and stalked out of the house, leaving his astonished nephew to reflect how little John really meant when he had promised to give Alden that which was better than lodging, food or clothing—liberty of action! And, leaving Laura to compare his present conduct in objecting to the keeping of the school, with his past conduct in refusing to sell his surplus fruits and vegetables, and to conclude that they were consistent with each other and with him—their great, ignorant, bigoted, blundering, but good-natured uncle.

"I am growing very impatient under all this, Laura," said Alden, turning to his sister.

"I am not only not getting on with my education, but I am falling back. I like Uncle John, but I do not wish

to degenerate into a mere animal. I know that if it were not for his prejudices, I could make money enough by teaching to pay my college fees; or I could get some situation where I could make money enough to pay for a college course."

"Uncle Jacky would never consent, Alden," sighed Laura.

"Don't I know it? He's as stupid and as stubborn as one of his own mules," said Alden, bitterly.

"Oh, don't say that, Aldy! He is so generous and kind-hearted."

"Oh, that be—blamed! His generosity and kindness is going to ruin all my prospects in life, combined with his stupidity and stubbornness. If he were less generous and kind-hearted, he would turn me out of the house. If he were less stupid and stubborn, he would let me go, with his blessing. In either case I should be the gainer. For I know, with the educational foundation that I have already got, I could go on and succeed. But I'll tell you what, Laura, if Uncle Jack does not consent to let me go and do something for myself, I must go without his consent," said Alden, decisively.

"Oh, no, no, no, do not do anything like that! Nothing would ever come of it," said Laura, in affright.

"Sister, your welfare as well as my own demands that I should try to get on in the world. But there, now, don't cry! I'm not going to break away this winter, anyway," said Alden, with a smile.

"Well, I'm glad of that, at all events. Something may happen before spring!" exclaimed Laura, with the hopefulness of youth.

Laura was embarrassed, also. Her shoes were all worn out. And she was wearing slippers about the house, and keeping herself within doors except in very dry weather. She had no money to buy a pair of shoes, nor did she wish to make her wants known to the impoverished family. She was thinking of taking her pretty writing-desk and work-

box to Wendover, and leaving them at a fancy store to be sold on commission for whatever they might bring, and of devoting the proceeds to the purchase of a pair of shoes for herself and boots for Alden; but she really did not know how to manage the matter without it coming to the knowledge of John Lytton and shocking his "family pride."

At length accident favored her. She lost or mislaid her little bunch of keys. And then she took her boxes and told "Uncle Jacky" that she wanted to go to Wendover to get keys fitted to them.

And John, to whom his "dead brother's daughter's" wishes were always commands, ordered Brooks to harness the brown pony to the gig and drive the young lady to the village. And then, at the last moment, Laura thought she would take her jewel casket and dressing-case also. And she brought them out to the gig and put them under the seat.

A pleasant drive through the autumn woods brought her to the mountain gap in which Wendover was situated.

She directed Brooks to drive up to Bastian's fancy store, and to hand in the boxes and leave her there to do her business, and to go himself with the gig to the Reindeer Hotel, to feed and water the horse, and then to return for her.

In this manner Laura got rid of a witness to her commercial transactions.

She told Bastian, the fat shopman, that she wished him to have keys fitted to her boxes. And after he had promised to do that she added that she wished him to sell them for her on commission, as they were all quite new, never having been used.

"How much do you expect to get for them, miss?" inquired Bastian.

"I don't know. I don't even know their first cost. They were presents to me from friends last Christmas," said Laura, striving, and not in vain, to keep back the tears that were rising to her eyes.

"Well, I am a fair judge of these articles, and I should suppose they would bring from twenty to thirty dollars apiece. Indeed, this malachite casket must have cost more," said the man, critically examining the elegant toy.

"Well," said Laura, "I should feel quite satisfied with twenty dollars apiece for them. Perhaps, as they are quite as good as new, never having been used, as I said, and as this is near the Christmas holidays, you may be able to dispose of them."

"I will do the best I can for you, miss," said Bastian.

"And, of course, you will have the usual commission," added Laura.

Bastian bowed, and removed the boxes from the counter to the shelves.

And Laura stood at the door, waiting for Brooks to come with the gig to take her home.

She had not long to wait. John Brooks soon drove up, and Laura bowed to the shopkeeper, who, however, gallantly came out and helped her into the gig.

Laura returned home much elated, for she thought that if she sold her boxes for twenty dollars apiece, after paying Bastian his liberal commission, she would still have seventy-two dollars, a large sum in Laura's present circumstances; enough to buy boots for her brother, shoes for herself, and Christmas presents for her cousins, and to leave a little surplus to lay away.

CHAPTER XIV

CRAVEN KYTE

Coming from church one day old Mrs. Lytton pulled Laura's arm and whispered:

"I want you to look at that 'oman—that one in the black silk gown and red meriny shawl and black velvet

bonnet. She's Mrs. Fanning, the landlady of the White Perch Point Hotel. She was the only sister of the governor's wife, and one of the greatest beauties in the country she was, about seventeen year ago. But she went and hev herself away on that good-for-nothing Fred Fanning. And her family cast her off, and now see what she has come to! She an't had nothing but bad luck ever since. And just about a year ago her darter—'like mother like darter,' you know—her darter, which was at the boarding-school in the city—and I never did approve of sending gals away from home to get their eddication among strangers—well, her darter, only fifteen year old last July, 'loped away from school with some low-life fellow or other, and, far as I can hear, an't never been seen nor yet heard on from that day to this Her pappy, Fred Fanning, he went up to the city when he heard the news; but he come back without his darter, and looking just like death."

"Yes, grandma, I know. I heard about all that. And I saw both Mr. and Mrs. Fanning when we stopped for a night at White Perch Point," said Laura.

"Oh, yes, to be sure; I forgot."

"And I thought they both looked crazed with grief, and as if something much worse than death had happened in their family," murmured Laura, compassionately, as her eyes turned again on the beautiful dark face of the unhappy woman.

But by this time they were all out of the church, and everybody was seeking his or her carriage, cart, horse or mule, as the case might be.

John Brooks, the man, came up with the carryall.

John Lytton, the master, was about to hand his mother into her seat.

"Stop-stop-stop, John! Hold on! Don't let the horses start till I get in. They're allers in sich a hurry when they know they're going home," cried the old lady, nervously.

"Now, mother, which John are you talking to? John master or John man? Laura, it is the plague of my life

that I and my man bear the same name! And it's all owing to my nurse, who, when I was two years old, had a baby boy whom she did me the doubtful honor of naming after me. It is the source of endless misunderstandings and inconveniences. For instance, we are all at work in the field—master and man. Well, mother suddenly wants one of us; goes to the door and blows the horn to attract attention, and then using it as a speaking-trumpet, vociferates, 'John!' Now, who's to know what John she means?" solemnly inquired Mr. Lytton, as he handed Kitty, Laura and the little girls into the carryall.

When the carryall had got a little way on the road, old Mrs. Lytton perceived that the squad of three horsemen, consisting of John Lytton, Charley and Alden, that had accompanied the carryall to church, was now increased to nine, the additional six being named by the old lady:

"Tom, Dick and Harry; Tag, Rag and Bobtail. Which I do believe, Kitty, as John has invited of 'em all home to dinner!"

"John will do as he pleases, mother! And it's no use to say one word," said Mrs. John, between a smile and a sigh.

"Who be they, then, anyway, as he has along of him?" inquired the widow, adding, "You've got younger eyes'n me to see with."

"Well, mother, there's Bastian, the fancy store man, and there's that young Craven Kyte, the salesman in Poplin's dry goods store."

"Two-two-two-two men as nobody knows nothing about, and never ought to have been invited to our house, especially that Craven Kyte, which John ought to be ashamed of hisself to have anything to do with him, after all as has been said!" cried the old lady.

"Mother, perhaps it is because of all that has been said that John does invite the poor young fellow!"

"You do-do-do-do-don't believe as John believes it?"

"No, mother, I don't. But whether John believes it or

not, or whether it be true or not, John does right in taking friendly notice of the poor boy. For if the story be true, then Craven has quite as great a claim of relationship on us as Alden and Laura has. If it be false, then he has as great a claim of indemnification from us for the injustice he has suffered in having his name connected so unfortunately with ours."

"Bless the woman! Don't preach! I han't got nothing against the young man personally, only people saying as he is my poor, dear dead Henry's own——"

"Hush, mother, for Heaven's sake!" whispered Mrs. John Lytton, glancing at Laura.

"Well, there, I have done! But I don't like his coming, that's all. Who be the others?"

"I don't know them, mother. They are too far behind for me to recognize them," said Mrs. John.

And then they drove on in silence, Laura wondering what the ill report could be that connected the name of the young shopman with that of her deceased father, and feeling a curiosity to see Craven Kyte.

Presently old Mrs. Lytton's fear of having two large a company to dinner was abated. For at the crossroads four of the cavalcade took leave—two going off to the right and two to the left; while two, Bastian and Kyte, came on with John Lytton and his boys.

"There, thank goodness, we'll only have a couple of outsiders, after all!" said the widow, much relieved.

"Oh, you inhospitable Christian!" exclaimed Mrs. Kitty, laughing.

"I know I am, honey; but I can't help it, times is so sca'ce."

The horsemen struck into a narrow bridle path, that cut off a considerable portion of the distance between Wendover and Lytton. So that when the carryall reached the house and drew up before the front door there stood John Lytton, the two boys and the two guests to receive them

Laura looked toward the two guests. The elder of these,

Bastian, the fancy-storekeeper, she knew very well. The other one she had never seen. And now, at first sight, she was struck and almost confounded by the very extraordinary likeness young Kyte bore to her deceased father, and also to her only brother. While she was standing staring in amazement, she was suddenly brought to her senses by the abruptness of John Lytton saying boisterously:

"Hullo, Lolly! Here's a beau I've been and brought you. Mr. Craven Kyte, Miss Laura Lytton."

The young man raised his hat and bowed with much politeness

Laura returned the bow. And then the young man was civilly welcomed by the other members of the family.

CHAPTER XV

ONE SATURDAY NIGHT

THE next day happened to be Saturday. Now Saturday morning was always devoted by old Mrs. Lytton to the domestic duty of clearing up house; and Saturday evening was always consecrated to the pious task of teaching the little negro children their catechism.

On this particular Saturday evning old Mrs. Lytton had about half a dozen of little imps, from four years old to seven, gathered around her hearth in her own bedroom. She was teaching them verbally, for not one of them could read. Laura came in and witnessed a strange scene.

Adam, son of John Brooks, was the youngest child present. He was scarcely four years old, and had never been to catechism class before. Now he stood up before his mistress, feeling both proud and shy.

"Now, Ad, take your fingers out of your hair and speak up like a man, and let Miss Laura hear how well you will learn your catechism."

"Es'm."

"That's you! Now then, who made you?"

"Ole Marse," promptly answered the little one.

Slap! fell the hand of the old lady upon the cheek of her pupil, and she said to the howling child:

"There! that's to lar-lar-larn you not to give such foolish answers! It's for your own good, and you ought to thank me for doing it. Stop bawling now, and listen while I tell you who made you."

The child being duly instructed upon that point, then came the next.

"Now hold up your head and listen.

"Es'm."

"What did the Lord make you for?"

"To pick cotton," sobbed the child.

Slap! fell the ready hand again, as the old lady said:

"No, sir; 'to serve Him.' "

"To serve Him," sobbed the child.

"Now stop bawling, and listen to me. It's all for your own good. You ought to be thankful. You-you see how I have to beat it inter 'em, Laura. Now, you little fool you!" said the instructress.

But before she could put another question John Lytton entered the room in a state of considerable excitement, exclaiming:

"I say, mother, here's a go!"

"For-for-for the Lord's sake, John, what is it?" stammered the old lady, starting up in alarm.

"Oh, it's nothing bad. It's a letter."

"A letter!"

"Yes. Come in the parlor. You too, Laura, for it concerns you also. You see, Craven Kyte happened to be at the post office at Wendover this morning, and the postmaster told him as this letter had been waiting there a week, and might wait a month before it was taken out, because we very seldom came near the post office; and so young Kyte asked if he could not bring it over. And the

postmaster trusted it to him. And do you think that young man hasn't rode all the way from Wendover to do us the favor of fetching our letter. He must sleep here to-night, and have an early breakfast to-morrow morning before he goes back."

"Course the boy must. But what on the face of the yeth is the letter about? And that anybody should ever write us a letter!" muttered the widow, as, with Laura, she followed John Lytton into the parlor.

"Wait till I sit down and fetch my breath," answered John.

The old lady greeted young Kyte with unusual kindness, thanked him for the trouble he had taken, and then settled herself to listen to the letter.

"Hem-m-m! It's from a city clergyman, and here it is," said John, clearing his throat and commencing to read:

"To JOHN LYTTON, ESQ.—Dear Sir: I have received a letter from a correspondent, who desires to remain unknown for the present, inclosing a check for five hundred dollars, drawn in my favor, but to be applied to the use of Alden and Laura, heirs of the late Henry Lytton. I have indorsed the check and made it payable to the order of Alden Lytton. But the money must be equally shared with his sister. Please acknowledge this by return mail. Respectfully yours, STEPHEN LYLE."

"And sure enough, here's the check!" said John Lytton, when he had finished the letter.

The check was passed around for inspection.

"Well, now, if this don't beat all!" exclaimed the widow.

"And an't it in good time!" cried Mrs. John.

"Hush, honey. I never had half as much money as that in all my life," chimed in Miss Molly.

"Whip your horses! An't you and Lolly rich?" cried Charley.

"And you can buy everything in the world," said Octy.

"And, oh, Lolly! Now you can go to school; only I shall cry my eyes out when you are gone," said Ulky, putting her head in her favorite's lap.

"I think the letter should be answered immediately," modestly suggested Craven Kyte.

But no one seemed to hear him. All were too much absorbed in the contemplation of the mystery of the money.

Alden remained thoughtfully standing by the fire, with his elbow on the corner of the mantelpiece and his head on his hand—the only silent member of the party.

"Who can it possibly be that has sent this money to you, Alden?" inquired John Lytton, looking up from the open letter and drawing his bushy red eyebrows together.

"I have not the slightest idea, Uncle John. Some wealthy man whom my father has befriended, probably," answered the youth gravely.

"Have you any no-no-no-no-notion, Laura?" inquired the old lady.

"Not the least, grandma," replied the girl.

"Maybe some one owed him money, and takes this way to pay it," suggested Mrs. John.

"Or some one as he went security for," murmured Miss Molly.

"Or a client as he won a lawsuit for, with a sight of money in it," put in Master Charley.

"Well, we must wait and see. In the course of time we shall know, I s'pose," concluded John Lytton, folding the letter.

"In the meantime let me suggest that the letter should be answered as soon as possible. It has already lain in the post office several days, while the writer has, no doubt, suffered much anxiety for the fate of the indorsed check," again counseled young Craven Kyte.

"That's so," said John sententiously. "And let's see what o'clock is it now?"

"It's just six," answered Laura, after consulting her little watch.

"And there's a mail goes out at midnight. I might have time to write and send the letter by John Brooks, so as to catch that mail," said John Lytton, scratching his red head.

"There's no need of that, sir. I shall be going back in an hour's time, and I will take it," said young Kyte.

"You going back to-night! Not if I know it," exclaimed John, while the women all chimed in with a storm of opposition.

Young Kyte waited until it had subsided, and then quietly answered:

"I thank you very much, but I have to sleep in Mr. Poplin's store every night to guard it. I am on a few hours' leave only, and I promised Mr. Poplin to be back by eleven certainly. So write your letter, Mr. Lytton, and give me the pleasure of posting it."

John Lytton and all the family expressed their regret that they should so quickly lose their guest. And then they thankfully accepted his offer to take the letter.

And while John Lytton with difficulty got his scattered writing materials together, and sat down to a side table, laboriously to compose his answer to the clergyman's letter, Mrs. Kitty prepared refreshments for their guest.

And a few minutes after seven o'clock Craven Kyte took leave of the family, mounted his horse and set out to ride to Wendover, carrying the letter in his pocket.

On the following Monday, Alden Lytton went to Wendover and cashed his check.

Laura was to receive half the money. So when he returned to the farmhouse he put two hundred and fifty dollars in his sister's hands.

Much consultation then ensued as to how this capital was to be invested.

Laura and Alden were both generously desirous of di-

viding it with the family who had sheltered them. But not one of the domestic circle would consent to that.

Then the brother and sister did a generous, foolish deed. They went to Wendover and spent a large proportion of their money in buying staple dry goods and groceries for the use of the household. And when these purchases were brought into the house old Mrs. Lytton cried and scolded, and Mrs. John expostulated, and Miss Molly groaned; but it was too late to prevent the donation now. The articles were bought and paid for, and there was nothing to be done but to keep them hidden away from John Lytton's sight, since that worthy, if he had known of the transaction, would have raved about his dead brother's children thinking it necessary to make any return of that sort for the care that had been bestowed upon them; and talked about his gray hairs being brought down, *et cetera*.

"But now, poor Alden, what becomes of your college scheme? I was so in hopes that you would consent to take my share of the money and go to Williamsburg," said Laura, when the brother and sister found themselves alone together.

"Never mind, Laura. I really could not see the kind woman want for good tea and coffee and white sugar, or for tight waterproof boots and comfortable wraps, any more than you could, my dear. But I have ordered some books from the city, which I will pay for with a part of the money. And I can study at home these long winter nights."

"Bless you, dearest! You deserve to get on, and you will do so," said the sister.

She also afterward sent for some books from the city for the use of herself and her little cousins.

And the youth and maiden spent the winter in helping the family with the farm and housework, in teaching their ignorant young relatives, and in reading and studying for their own intellectual advancement.

CHAPTER XVI

THE UNKNOWN BENEFACTOR

PLEASANTLY passed the winter and the spring at the farmhouse. Nothing more was heard from the Rev. Mr. Lyle concerning the secret friend of Alden and Laura Lytton until, one Saturday evening early in June, when all the family were sitting out on the piazza in front of their house, enjoying the balmy fragrance of the air, a horseman rode up and drew rein under the great horse-chestnut tree.

"Why, it is Mr. Craven Kyte!" exclaimed Mrs. John, recognizing the visitor.

Mr. Kyte dismounted and tied his horse to a hook in the trunk of the tree, and walked to the house.

"I have brought you a letter from the post office. It has not been left so long in its box as the former one. It came only this morning. Here it is," he said pleasantly, as he handed the letter to John Lytton.

"Thank you. How do you do? Thank you very much indeed. Pray take a seat. Have you had supper?" said John, taking the letter, and shaking hands cordially with the visitor, while the other members of the family also came forward to welcome him.

"Well, I'm blessed! It's another letter from Parson Lyle," exclaimed John, staring at the envelope.

"Read it! read it, John!" exclaimed the old lady.

"Wait! I want to know first if Mr. Craven Kyte has had his supper," said hospitable John.

"Why, of course he hasn't, Jacky. He must have started from Wendover long before supper time, to have got here now. Octy, go and tell Mandy to set the table and prepare supper for Mr. Kyte," said Aunt Kitty.

"Oh, do read the letter, John!" impatiently exclaimed the widow.

"Yes, mother. Whe-ew! Nephew and niece, here's news! Listen!"

"JOHN LYTTON, ESQ.—Dear Sir: I have had placed in my hands, in trust for the benefit of the son and daughter of the late Henry Lytton, the sum of two thousand dollars, to be devoted to their maintenance and education for the school and college year commencing the first of September, proximo. I am given to understand that the same sum will be paid annually into my hands for their benefit, until their education shall be completed. It is necessary that I should confer personally with yourself and Mr. and Miss Lytton on this subject. I shall therefore either expect to see you with your nephew and niece here, or I will make you a visit at your own house, at your pleasure. Waiting your reply, dear sir, I remain yours truly,

"STEPHEN LYLE."

"There! What do you think of that?" inquired John.

"The laws a messy upon my soul! I'm dumfounded!" exclaimed old Mrs. Lytton, who thereupon began and poured forth a torrent of conjectures truly miraculous in a "dumfounded" woman.

"Two thousand dollars a year for two young people!" cried Mrs. John.

"Did ever mortal soul hear the like?" put in Miss Molly; while the young people were equally voluble in expressions of wonder and astonishment.

"Now who can it be as is agoing to all this here expense for poor Harry's chillun?" piteously inquired Mrs. Lytton, who was suffering pangs of curiosity. "Alden and Laura, surely you two, or least one on you, could give a guess," she added, appealing to the young people.

"Indeed we cannot, grandma," answered Laura and Alden in a breath.

"We shall hear all about it when the parson comes down, for that's the way it must be. As there's three of us here

and only one of him there, you see, why of course he must come to us, rather than we go to him; besides, it would be more hospitable to invite him down here, than to offer to go and see him there," concluded old-fashioned John, folding up the letter and putting it into his pocket.

"When will you answer that, uncle?" inquired Alden seriously.

"When will I answer it? Stay; let me see. This is Saturday night, isn't it? So, if I don't answer it to-night, I can't answer it until Monday, can I? For, though I don't set up to be much of a saint, I can't answer letters on Sunday, that's certain. So I reckon I'll write to-night. And we can drop the letter in the post office as we go to church to-morrow."

And with these words John got up and went in search of writing materials, and after some difficulty got together a half dried-up inkstand, a stump-quill pen and a few whity-brown sheets of paper, and then he sat down at the table in the hall, by the light of a tallow candle, to write his letter to the minister. Writing was always a sore trial to honest John, and it was well that it was not imposed on him more than once or twice in the course of a year. At length, after having spoiled several sheets of paper, the task was satisfactorily completed, and the letter was read aloud to the family, with no little pride by its author.

"There! Now I think that will do," he said, as he proceeded to fold and seal it.

His work was duly applauded, and then the yawning family, who had been kept up much beyond their usual hour of retiring, and their tired guest, bade each other good-night and went to bed.

The next day being the Sabbath they all went to church. On their way through the village John Lytton stopped and dropped his letter in the night box of the post office.

Several days passed before the reply of the minister came. It was satisfactory. Mr. Lyle proposed to leave

town by the early train on Monday morning, and hoped to reach Wendover on Monday evening.

"We must send the carryall to meet him at the station. And I rather think that I or Alden, or maybe both of us, had better go with it. It would be showing respect like to the stranger," said John Lytton. And his family all agreed with him.

Accordingly, on Monday afternoon John Lytton and Alden set out in the carryall to go to the Wendover station to meet the Rev. Mr. Lyle, while old Mrs. Lytton and Mrs. John went into the kitchen to look after the preparation of an excellent supper for the expected visitor.

The uncle and nephew reached Wendover an hour before the train was expected to arrive. John stopped at the "Reindeer" to feed and water his horses, and while the animals were taking their refreshments, their master walked into the barroom for a draught of ale and a word with the landlord.

John was an inveterate male gossip, and could not have kept a secret even if its disclosure should have hanged him. So presently he astonished Mr. Greenfield by telling him the nature of the business that had brought himself and his nephew to Wendover.

"To meet a reverend gentleman, sir, who comes down to us as the agent of a wealthy party who wishes to send Alden to college and Laura to boarding-school at his own cost; who, in fact, proposes to pay, through the hands of Mr. Lyle, two thousand dollars a year for their support and education until the boy gets his profession, and the girl her husband. I do not more than half like the idea of my nephew and niece being under obligations to a stranger, but still I can't stand out against the interests of poor Henry's children, especially as I rather suspect that this money will be, after all, the payment of some debt that the debtor does not wish openly to acknowledge," said John, with a knowing wink.

"In fact, restitution—conscience money," put in Mr. Greenfield.

"Yes, that's what I mean. Conscience money," said John.

"But you don't suspect who is a-paying of it, or what it is for?"

"No."

"Well, I do."

"Lor'!" said John, opening his round blue eyes.

"Yes, I do. I think it's Governor Cavendish, and nobody else."

"Whe-ew-ew!" said John, with a long whistle, as he fell into deep thought.

"Now, I'll tell you why. Governor Cavendish pardoned out the murderer of their father, without any reason anybody knows anything about for doing so. And now it's my belief he is secretly making it up to the children. And just see how able he is to do it, too. Why, what's two thousand dollars a year to Charles Cavendish, with his income of two hundred thousand?"

"To be sure not much. But, no," said John, wisely shaking his red head. "I can't think it. It is not Governor Cavendish. Nor blest if I know who it is! There's the whistle!" he suddenly exclaimed, as the shriek of the approaching engine was heard.

And he started up, bade a hasty good-morning to the landlord, and went out and jumped into the carryall, where Alden was already seated, turned the horses' heads and reached the station just as the train thundered in and stopped.

CHAPTER XVII

CONSCIENCE MONEY

THERE was but one passenger for Wendover, and that was a little fair-haired young man, in a dusty suit of black cloth, whom John easily identified as the Rev. Mr. Lyle.

While the minister was looking about, himself in some uncertainty as to his next step, John walked up, raised his hat, and said:

"I have the honor of speaking to the Rev. Mr. Lyle?"

"That is my name, sir," replied the traveler, bowing, and slightly lifting his eyebrows in surprise.

"All right! My name's John Lytton, and this youth is my nephew Alden, of whom you wrote to me."

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Lytton," answered the stranger, taking John's offered hand. "And yours, too, young sir," he added, shaking hands with Alden.

"Now, I've got a conveyance here all ready; horses rested and 'freshed, and will take you to the Lodge in a jiffy. This all your luggage?" said John, laying hold of a carpetbag in the hand of the traveler.

"Thanks; this is all, but do not trouble yourself with it. I could not possibly permit you to carry it for me," objected Mr. Lyle.

"Oh, nonsense. You're my visitor, you know. This way, sir, if you please," said John, forcibly taking possession of the little preacher's carpetbag, and sturdily trudging on before him.

"You are very kind, I'm sure," said Mr. Lyle, following with a deprecating air, until they reached the spot where the carryall was waiting.

"Get in, sir, get in," said John, politely helping his guest up into a comfortable back seat, and then putting the carpetbag under the box.

The little preacher returned thanks, and settled himself.

John climbed to a seat beside his visitor, and then said to his nephew:

"Alden, you may sit on the front seat and drive. I'm going to sit along o' the parson to talk to him."

Alden mounted the driver's seat, and started the horses.

But it was not until they had left the village behind them and entered upon the forest road that Mr. Lytton turned to his guest and said:

"I left my coachman behind o' purpose. I drove the carryall into town, and let Alden drive it home also o' purpose. I want to have a confidential talk along of you here, where there an't no women nor niggers to be overhearing of us and telling tales. And now I want you to tell me confidential who is this party that wants to undertake such a heavy job as to pay for the genteel support and college education of these two young people?"

"I am not at liberty to disclose his name, but I may say that I believe he will perform all that he has promised to do, and that his motives for keeping himself in the background of his good works are justifiable," replied the little preacher.

John Lytton shoved his big red hand up under his fur cap, scratched his head reflectively, and then he grunted forth:

"Hum, hum! You know him yourself though?"

"Yes; I know him very well."

"He an't Governor Cavendish?"

"No, he is not Governor Cavendish. But there, you see, I must answer no more such questions as that; for if I begin to tell you who he is not, you may soon, upon the principle of 'exclusion,' as the doctors call it, find out who he is. And it is expedient that his name should be a secret, at least for the present," said the trustee gravely.

"One more question, and then I have done, sir," said John, with a sort of rude self-respect.

Mr. Lyle bowed.

"You will see yourself, sir, that it is due to my honor that I should ask and you should answer it."

"Put your question, Mr. Lytton, and if I can properly reply to it I will," said the parson.

"Then, Mr. Lyle, as you know all about this party, will you tell me whether he is a man from whom a faithful guardian could with honor permit his young wards to receive so heavy an obligation?"

"Yes, sir, he is. And, moreover, neither you nor I, nor any other person, could prevent him from setting apart this yearly sum for the support and education of Henry Lytton's children. He will place it in bank for them. He wishes it to be used for the purpose specified. If it is not so used, it will still be placed there and left to accumulate principal and interest, until the young people shall be of age. For this man feels that in doing this he is discharging a secret debt that he owes to the children of Henry Lytton."

John slapped his own leg exultingly, exclaiming:

"Conscience money! I knew it! Conscience money! Is it not, now?"

"If you choose to call it so."

"Well, but an't it, now?"

"In some sense, yes."

"In that case, I suppose that, without detriment to their honor, my nephew and niece may receive this assistance?"

"They assuredly may," answered the trustee.

"Alden! What the deuce are you a doing of, boy! Going right over that bank! Do you want to break all our necks?" exclaimed John Lytton, suddenly starting up and taking the reins from the hands of his nephew, who, while too intent upon the conversation that concerned himself so nearly, had let the horses swerve from the middle of the road to the edge of the precipice, as they were going down the side of a heavily wooded hill.

Alden smiled, gave up the reins, and as soon as the carriage was righted, willingly changed seats with his uncle.

And so John Lytton drove for the remainder of the way home, where they arrived at about dusk.

All the women of the house dearly loved a minister of the gospel, and so they had done their best to receive him with honor.

An excellent supper was prepared. And the women and children and servants were all in their Sunday's best clothes.

And John introduced the visitor to his wife, mother and aunt, and then took him off to a bedroom, where there was plenty of fresh water and clean towels, wherewith to refresh himself after his dusty, smutty and smoky railway ride.

As soon as the traveler had washed, combed and dressed himself, he went down to the big parlor, where the family were gathered to receive him. And in a few minutes supper was announced, and he was shown into the sitting room, where an ample evening repast awaited him.

After supper, the family and their visitor adjourned to the "big parlor."

They had no entertainment to offer him—no music, no books, no pictures, except the time-smoked family portraits on the walls, and it seemed tacitly understood that there was to be no business discussed until the next day. So conversation flagged. And the women, deprived of their usual evening occupations of knitting, sewing, etc., laid aside in honor of their guest, found time hang heavily on their hands, and sighed and yawned audibly and visibly.

At length, after an hour or two of dulness, John Lytton summoned Cassy, the cook, and called for cider, spices, sugar and ice, and proceeded to brew a bowl of sherbet, which he afterward passed around in large, generous glasses. And then, as the hour was late and the guest fatigued, John offered to attend Mr. Lyle to his room.

The women all seemed deeply shocked. Honest John had been guilty of a breach of etiquette, which old Mrs.

Lytton hastily sought to repair by stammering, in much trepidation:

"May-may-may-maybe the Rev. Mr. Lyle will do us the kindness to stop first, and lead our family worship?"

"Certainly, certainly," said the minister, reseating himself.

John stared. Family worship had never been an institution at Lytton Lodge, where each one had always done his or her own individual praying, by metaphorically entering his or her closet and closing the door.

However, he soon recovered himself, and mumbling something or other about:

"If Mr. Lyle would be so good," he sank back upon his seat.

The minister opened the Bible that old Mrs. Lytton had placed on a stand with a lighted candle by his side, and began the evening services by reading the first portion of the Sermon on the Mount.

Then, after prayers, they separated for the night.

After breakfast the next morning, all the family being assembled in conclave in the "big parlor," the great questions were taken up, as to what college should be selected for Alden, and what ladies' boarding-school for Laura.

Now, honest John Lytton and his simple family knew about as much of colleges and schools as an Eskimo or a Hottentot. So the decision of the question was left to the Rev. Mr. Lyle, subject only to the will of the young gentleman and lady who were expected to become candidates for scholastic honors.

The trustee, who was influenced by a great reverence for antiquity, chose for the young gentleman the old seat of learning, the University of Virginia. And for the young lady he recommended the celebrated Christian Ladies' College of Mount Ascension.

He advised that they should both make arrangements to enter these at the beginning of the first semi-annual term, which would be about the first of September. And

he wrote a check for two hundred dollars each for their necessary outfit, and offered the use of his own bachelor house, should they decide to go to town to do their shopping.

All these matters being well arranged, the minister bade all good-by, and set out for the city.

CHAPTER XVIII

MOUNT ASCENSION

THERE came a spell of fine, cool weather late in August. Taking advantage of this, Mr. and Mrs. John Lytton, with their nephew and niece, set out for the city to give the two young people proper college and school outfits.

Through the agency of Mr. Lyle, they found cheap board in a private family for the few days they intended to remain in town.

Alden's necessities were the first to be attended to. The Rev. Mr. Lyle managed the business correspondence with the authorities of the University of Virginia, and arranged that Alden Lytton should enter the celebrated institution of learning at the commencement of the ensuing term, early in September. And Alden himself saw to the purchase of proper clothing, books, stationery, and so forth.

So about the fifteenth of the month, Alden, being quite ready, set out with Mr. Lyle to Charlottesville, where he was duly entered.

Meanwhile Mrs. John Lytton, with her niece, Laura, was very busy engaged in shopping.

They had the Mount Ascension school circular before them, embellished with a steel frontispiece of the school buildings, and a vignette likeness of the founder. And besides the history, constitution, and by-laws of the school, program of classes and studies, and list of professors,

teachers, officers, graduates and pupils, there was a regulation list of articles every young lady was required to bring —in which every article of linen was to be provided by the dozen, except in the item of pocket handkerchiefs, of which there were to be six dozens.

It was not until the day of their separation, when Laura's big trunk was packed for school, and Mrs. Lytton's little trunk was packed for Lytton Lodge, when it was too late to reject presents, that Laura put some bundles in her auntie's hands, saying:

"Give these to my darlings. I really could not make up my mind to go away without sending them something pretty."

"Oh, Laura, what is this?" inquired Aunt Kitty, unrolling the parcels.

When she saw the pretty dresses, aprons, and shoes, which Laura had somehow procured for her little friends, she looked half-reproachfully, half-gratefully, at her niece, as she said:

"Oh, you very extravagant girl! What do you mean by this? You'll spoil my children and ruin yourself."

"No fear of either, auntie," said Laura.

And she hastily kissed her friend good-by, for the carriage was waiting at the door to take her to the steamboat landing, and Mr. Lyle was waiting in the hall to escort her.

The carriage started for the steamboat wharf, where it arrived in time to catch the boat.

John Lytton went blubbering into the house, where he remained until it was time to take his wife to the railway station.

And in an hour John and Kitty were rushing across country to their home at Lytton Lodge. And Laura and Mr. Lyle were steaming up the river to Mount Ascension.

It was late in the afternoon of a clear September day when Mr. Lyle and Laura Lytton stood in the bow of the

boat, looking up the river; for they were approaching their destination.

Before them the river widened, or, as it were, opened its arms to enfold a most picturesque and beautiful island, that rose like a wooded hill from the bosom of the water, while on either bank lofty, forest-crowned cliffs towered overshadowing the scene. Before them, still further up the river, the sun was sinking to the horizon, and flooding all the sky and water with a golden glory.

"Passengers for Mount Ascension please to get ready to land!" vociferated a boatman, at the same time ringing a bell to attract attention.

"Your trunk and traveling bag are up on deck ready to be landed, my dear; and if you have any more preparations to make, you had better hurry," said Mr. Lyle.

"I have nothing to do, but to snatch up my little bag and parasol. I can do that in a minute. And I don't wish to miss a ray of the sunset. I am a sun-worshiper though a Christian also, Mr. Lyle. And why not? Is not the sun the most glorious object we see in nature? Is not the sun a symbol of the Lord? Is not the sun the light and life of the material world, as the Lord is of the spiritual?" asked Laura, her countenance beaming with enthusiasm.

"You—are—on—dangerous—ground—my dear. Better be careful how you talk and think," said the preacher, uneasily.

While he spoke, the steamer came to an anchor in the middle of the channel, and a long rowboat was lowered on the larboard side, and manned to take the passengers and their luggage to the landing-place at Mount Ascension.

"We are the only passengers, I do believe," said Mr. Lyle as he handed Laura down, and then followed her into the boat.

"No, there is a young lady coming," whispered Laura, as a slight and graceful girlish figure, dressed in deep

mourning and closely veiled, came forward and let herself be helped down into the boat by the oarsmen.

Mr. Lyle and Laura were the most astonished, because neither of them had seen this young lady during their voyage on board the steamer. She must have purposely secluded herself while there. And now she was closely veiled, as if to avoid recognition. They only knew that she was youthful by the light and graceful movements of her slender and supple form.

The boat was shoved off from the side of the steamer and headed toward the island.

When it came to within a few yards of the landing-place the lady lifted her heavy black crape veil, revealing behind it a widow's cap, encircling the most bewitching, childlike face her fellow passengers had ever seen. Her features were small and perfectly molded. Her complexion was a rich, ripe brown, brightening into a deep crimson bloom upon her cheeks and lips. Her hair, eyes, eyelashes and eyebrows were all black as night. She did not seem to be more than fifteen years of age. And yet her lovely face was encircled in a widow's cap!

While Laura was admiring, wondering over and compassionating the beautiful, childlike widow, the latter turned and spoke to her, in the sweetest voice the girl had ever heard:

"You are going to Mount Ascension, I presume?"

"Yes, madam," answered Laura, feeling how strange it was to address that childish creature by such a matronly title.

"I also am going there. We shall be acquaintances, and I hope we shall be friends," said the little lady.

"I thank you, madam. I should be very much pleased," answered Laura, softly. And then she ventured to add, "But you are not one of the pupils?"

The youthful widow smiled faintly as she answered:

"Oh, no; not one of the young ladies. I am to teach drawing and painting. That is almost my only accom-

plishment, and I must turn it to account now," she added, with a slight sigh.

The boat touched the stairs leading up to a little landing-house. Mr. Lyle got out first, and with a very kind smile and bow reached down his hand to help the child in widow's weeds out of the boat.

With a glance full of sweetness she thanked him.

Laura followed.

And the three left their luggage to be landed by the boatmen, and walked up the wild, rocky pathway leading up the wooded hill to the school-grounds and buildings that occupied the central and highest part of the island, and that now came into sight.

A white freestone palace with many verandas and balconies, and elegant outbuildings, a verdant lawn with terraces and marble stairs, parterres of flowers, groves of trees, vine-clad arbors, clear ponds, marble statues, and all else that could contribute to the health, beauty and delight of the scene.

"Oh, what an enchanting place! I wonder if I have died and come to heaven?" exclaimed Laura, in a sort of rapture, as she gazed. "It will be happiness enough only to live and breathe here, will it not?" she inquired, appealing to the youthful widow.

The childlike face changed, the soft, dark eyes filled with tears, the tender lips trembled, but the young creature did not answer.

And Laura understood that no scene of brightness could ever bring real gladness to that bereaved and mourning young heart.

They were now walking up the marble steps leading from terrace to terrace up to the white mansion which was to be their future home. Parterres of the most beautiful flowers enameled the green grass. Two crystal fountains played in white marble basins, the one on the right, the other on the left.

Passing between these, the party of three went up the

broad stairs leading to the principal door of the building. There was no need to knock, for the door was wide open, revealing the whole length of the central hall to another open door at the back, with other steps leading down into a beautiful garden.

A comely, middle-aged matron, who seemed to be the portress, arose from an armchair, where she had been sitting embroidering, and stood ready to receive the visitors.

"We wish to see Mrs. St. John, if you please," said the minister.

"Madam is in the grove with the young ladies just now, but they will be in in a few moments. Walk into the receiving room, if you please, young ladies. And be so good as to give me your card, sir," said the portress, as she opened a door on the right hand, leading into a large, airy room with many windows, through which the pleasant prospect of woods and waters could be everywhere seen.

Mr. Lyle gave his card to the portress, and then followed his two female companions into the delightful waiting-room.

CHAPTER XIX

THE YOUNG SCHEMER

Soon after the door of the receiving room opened, and a lady entered—a lady of such an aspect and demeanor of majesty and sweetness that Laura's heart was drawn in love and reverence to her.

As a guide and teacher of young womanhood, she had a world-wide fame. By her young charges she was almost worshiped. As she crossed the room and came nearer Laura, looking at her with respectful interest, saw a tall, fair, blue-eyed woman, of perhaps sixty years of age, whose only sign of advanced life was her snow-white hair, that was arranged in puffs around her forehead, under a rich

lace cap. She wore a plain gray silk dress, with collar and cuffs of lace.

Mr. Lyle and his two young companions arose to receive her.

"The Rev. Mr. Lyle, I believe," she said, with a smile.

"The same, madam. And I presume I have the honor of speaking to Mrs. St. John?" said the little minister, stiffly.

"Yes, sir; I am glad to see you. This, I presume, is your young ward," she next said, holding out her hand to the young widow.

"I beg your pardon, madam. That lady is Mrs. Grey," said Mr. Lyle, who had learned the youthful widow's name.

"Ah, I am glad to see you, Mrs. Grey. I was expecting you with anxiety. Please take a seat," said the lady, glancing with surprise at the childish face and the widow's cap that she had not observed before.

The young creature bowed and sat down.

"This is my ward, Miss Lytton," said Mr. Lyle, presenting Laura.

"How do you do, my dear? I am very happy to welcome you to our house," said the lady, warmly, shaking hands with the young girl, and leading her to a seat.

Laura bowed and blushed, and took the seat that was offered her.

"I have another young lady from your neighborhood, my dear Miss Lytton," said Mrs. St. John.

"Yes, ma'am," answered Laura, looking up.

"She is a Miss Cavendish—Miss Emma Cavendish of Blue Cliffs. She arrived on Monday last," said Mrs. St. John.

"Oh, yes, ma'am; I know who she is. My uncle's place is quite near her papa's. But I do not know her personally at all," said Laura.

"I hope that you will soon know and like each other, for you will share the same room for the present, but not for any length of time, if the arrangement should prove to

be inconvenient to either of you. And now, my dear, I will show you to your room, where you may take off your hat and prepare for tea. Mrs. Grey, will you come with us? Mr. Lyle, a footman will attend to your apartment immediately. Tea will be ready in half an hour. Come, young ladies," said Mrs. St. John, smiling, and leading the way, followed by the youthful widow and Laura Lytton.

Mrs. St. John led Laura and Mrs. Grey upstairs to a spacious hall lighted by a skylight, through which the moon poured a flood of silver radiance, and from which many white doors on all sides opened into the chambers occupied by the young girls.

She knocked at a door on the right.

A sweet voice invited her to enter.

She opened the door, and led her companions into a pretty bedroom, in which everything was white, pure and fresh.

A fair and most beautiful girl of about fifteen years with her golden hair flowing freely over her white robe advanced from the bedside to meet her visitors. This was Emma Cavendish, to whom Mrs. St. John introduced the two strangers, and then leaving Laura with Emma as her roommate, she conducted Mrs. Grey to a room on the opposite side of the hall, told her it was to be her room, and then took her leave.

Mary Grey laid off her black crape bonnet, with its deep crape veil, and then went and stood before the dressing-table, and gazed at her reflected image in the glass.

"Yes," she said to herself, "I am beautiful enough and clever enough to make my own way and do my own will in this world. There are gates of entrance and paths leading to the highest places. And only the highest place will suit me. I might make my fortune on the stage, but fortune is not all that I want. I want position. And I will have it. Nothing else will satisfy me. And to attain position, I must climb from perfectly respectable and unimpeachable base: that of humble boarding-school drawing mistress;

humble enough indeed, but so perfectly respectable and unimpeachable! And the only way in which I can get hold of the heart of some young heiress and climb over her head to some high seat! But ah, fate! My greatest difficulty will be with my own heart! Can I always keep down its strong affections and silence its cries? Yes, I can, and I will!" she said, grimly, setting her teeth.

"Now let me look once more at these testimonials, before I show them to Mrs. St. John," she murmured, as she went to her traveling bag and took from it a packet of letters. She sat down with them and examined each one carefully in turn.

"Perfect! perfect!" she murmured, smiling strangely to herself. "Nothing could be better counterfeited. Here my gift of imitation, or *fac-similes* manufacture, comes into play. The magnates whose letters these purport to be, and whose signatures they bear, would be almost forced to acknowledge them as their own, or be suspected of falsehood."

That night some seventy souls in all reposed peacefully in the mansion of Mount Ascension. And among them was one fair angel and one beautiful devil. And it is with these two, as principals, that our story now has to deal.

CHAPTER XX

THE SERPENT IN EDEN

THE next day being the Sabbath, there was divine service held in the largest classroom.

The Rev. Mr. Lyle officiated in the morning. In the afternoon he went to a negro meeting-house, three miles off on the mainland, and preached there. But he returned in time for the school tea. After which he compensated himself for his laborious Sabbath day's duties by sitting

on the sofa with Mrs. Grey, and talking to her all the evening. On Monday morning he took his departure.

That Monday the school was organized for the autumn and winter term. Emma Cavendish and Laura Lytton were placed in the same class. They sat side by side at the same double desk. They read, wrote, drew, danced and played duets together. Out of school hours, they took long walks all around the island and beach together, and they talked of their relative home lives.

One afternoon they sat together on a rock at the south end of the island, looking down the river, now clear as a mirror, and reflecting in its deep bosom the hilly and green wooded banks, and the burning red sunset sky.

They had been silent for some time, looking at the beautiful scene. Then Emma spoke:

"This is a lovely place—a heaven on earth. And I should be very happy here if it were not for thoughts of my dear father."

"He is well and prosperous, I hope," put in Laura.

"No, neither. By one noble, but unpopular act, he lost much of his popularity. That was very depressing to a just man, who would do no wrong deed to conciliate public favor, and also very mortifying to a great statesman, whose whole life lay in his ambition. The election for governor comes off again this autumn, and it is supposed that he will certainly lose it."

"It seems very hard that the governor should lose place and power for doing right."

"Disappointment for the past, anxiety for the future, affects my father's health. Though not yet sixty years old, I can see that he is failing very fast. And now that, more than ever, he needs the solace of domestic life."

"His family dwindling away?" echoed Laura.

"Yes; my widowed aunt, Mrs. Wesley, who used to live with him, has married a Baptist missionary minister, and gone with him to China. And I have come away to school. And my grandmother, who is over eighty years of age,

now keeps her chamber altogether. So my father is very lonely in his home."

"Yes, indeed. Is he in the city now, or in the country?"

"He is at Blue Cliffs. But he will go to the city, at the meeting of the legislature. Then he will be more lonely in his domestic life than ever, for my grandmother will not accompany him. She is not able to bear the journey."

"But you will go to him at Christmas, for a few weeks?"

"Yes, my dear, most assuredly. And I mean to entreat you and Mrs. Grey also, poor, little beauty! to go home with me to spend the holidays, if you will do me so much kindness."

"Thanks, dear Em; I should be ever so much pleased, I am sure," said Laura, throwing her arms around the neck of her friend, kissing her fondly, and thus frankly expressing the delight she felt at the prospect of accompanying Emma Cavendish to the city, and being a guest at the Executive Mansion for the Christmas holidays.

"But—I wonder who Mrs. Grey really is. You are so much more intimate with her than I am, Em; perhaps you can tell me," said Laura, after a while.

"Yes, poor, little thing! she seems to take to me most strangely. I do not know why. She has told me all about herself. She was left an orphan at an early age, in the care of an uncle. That uncle died. In less than two years the uncle's widow married again. The second husband showed that he was not disposed to support the niece of his wife's first husband. You see the poor girl's miserable position?"

"Oh, yes."

"You will not wonder, then, that she accepted the first eligible offer of marriage. It was from a young clergyman, who, soon after the wedding, took his youthful bride to Mobile, Alabama, where he was called to the charge of a small parish. This was only last spring a year ago."

"Yes. Well?"

"Ah, dear! In the summer that followed, the yellow

fever broke out with great virulence in the city. The young minister, William Grey, devoted himself to the sick and dying in the almshouse and the hospitals, and—of course, you can guess the end."

"He took the fever."

"Ah, yes; he took the fever, and died within five months after his wedding day, leaving his young wife a widow at sixteen."

"How very sad!"

"Is it not? And she is so beautiful! She might marry again easily. The Rev. Mr. Lyle is pleased with her. He has written to her three times since he left here. And all our professors are 'smitten.' But it is easy to see that her heart is buried in the grave of her husband."

"But she has a very good appetite," said Laura, a little incredulously.

"Yes; she is such a child! And children, you know, cry and eat, eat and cry. You never knew grief to take away a child's appetite," answered Emma.

"Well, and then she dresses so richly and tastefully, though in the deepest widow's mourning," objected Laura.

"A child also loves pretty things, and loves them not the less because she is in grief."

"You are an angel, Em! You live in a sphere of goodness and beauty, and can see and feel nothing else. But I advise you not to invite this fascinating 'child' widow, who is making such havoc among the hearts of even our reverend clergy and learned faculty, to your widowed father's house unless—you want her for a stepmother!"

"Oh, Laura! What an idea! I am very much shocked. My dear father is faithful still to the memory of my angel mother who went to heaven when I was but a babe. And Mary Grey looks forward to nothing but a reunion with her sainted husband, who has won the crown of martyrdom, and awaits his bride in glory."

"And meantime she may have to live some fifty years in this wicked world, and satisfy her appetite and her vanity

as well as she can. Nonsense, my dear. A pretty, little, penniless widow who loves good dinners and fine dresses as well as Mary Grey does, will not wear the willow very long."

"Oh, Laura, how hard you are!"

"I am a lawyer's daughter, darling. And, perhaps, I have inherited some of my father's hard, legal acumen. And I give you the benefit without a retaining fee, Em."

"Let us return to the house. The sun has gone down. I feel as if it had gone down in a double sense. You chill me, Laura, dear! But promise me this. If ever you find out that you have been unjust to Mary Grey, you will acknowledge it."

"I promise that, on my sacred honor, dear Em," answered Laura, and the two girls walked back to the house.

Laura went to the music-room to practice a solo.

Emma noticed Mrs. Grey standing sadly apart, and she went to her and put her arm within hers, and said:

"Let us walk up and down the piazza a little while. It is so pleasant here."

The young widow smiled assent.

"Emma, dearest," said Mrs. Grey, as they walked arm in arm up and down the long piazza, "you never had a sister?"

"No, nor a brother. I was an only child. My mother died when I was but a few months old."

Poor, little girl! But, perhaps, you have cousins who are like sisters to you."

"Ah, no! I have but one cousin; and her I have never seen."

"Indeed! That is strange. But, perhaps, she was born and reared at a great distance from you, and that would account for your never having seen her."

"No, indeed! She was born and reared within twenty miles of my father's country house. And yet, lonely as my motherless and sisterless life has been, and much as

I have longed to know my cousin, I have always been forbidden to see her."

"That was very strange. But, perhaps, there was some good reason for such prohibition."

"There was a reason. The story is so well known in our neighborhood, that you might as well hear it."

"Yes, dear; for all that concerns you, however remotely, is deeply interesting to me. Tell it."

"Well, then, my dear, sainted mother once had a half-sister 'the flower of the flock,' the pride and the plague of the family; for she was as beautiful as an angel, and as wilful as an imp. She might have chosen among the best young men of rank in the country, for they were all her suitors. But when she was eighteen years of age, she ran away and married one Frederick Fanning, the son of a hotelkeeper, whose acquaintance she accidentally and improperly made, while her family were stopping for a few days at his father's hotel at White Perch Point. You know the place?"

"I have heard of it."

"Twenty years ago, as I have been told, it was a very prosperous place of summer resort. But this Frederick Fanning was a handsome, wild, reckless young man, and soon squandered the property his father had left him, and thus he brought his bride to 'comparative poverty,' as it was called, if you know what kind of poverty that is—I don't," smiled Emma.

"Nor I. I only know what positive poverty is," sighed Mrs. Grey.

"Her family would do nothing to help him. They had utterly discarded her on her imprudent marriage. 'Fortunately,' it was said, the reckless pair had no children—only one child, a daughter, the cousin of whom I speak."

"Ah!"

"Her name, I have heard, is Ivy—Ivy Fanning. As I told you, I was never permitted to seek her acquaintance, however much I might have desired it. And at one time

I did desire it very much. I have never even set my eyes on her, and now I know I never shall," said Emma, sadly.

"Why?"

"Why? Poor Ivy! They say that she was beautiful, exceedingly. But I suppose a seaside public-house, like the White Perch Point Hotel, is not a proper place to bring up a young girl in. Be that as it may, when Ivy was about fourteen years of age they sent her away from home, to a boarding-school in the city. She remained there some twelve or fourteen months, and then—and then—I can tell you no more," murmured Emma, in a very low voice, as she covered her face with her hands and wept.

" 'How shall woman tell
Of woman's sin and not with tears? She fell.'

"Was it not so, my darling?" softly inquired the widow.

Emma bowed her head and wept.

"And—her unhappy parents! What of them?"

"I have heard that her father, when told of her flight from school, went up to the city to try to find and recover her. But he returned without his daughter, and forbade her name ever to be mentioned in his hearing again."

"And then?"

"The story got abroad, and was rehearsed with many variations and exaggerations, no doubt. Low as the Fannings had fallen, they could not bear that dishonor; and so last spring they left the neighborhood."

There was silence between the talkers for a time, and then, in a low, tremulous tone, Mrs. Grey inquired:

"Do you know where they have gone?"

"Some say, to California."

And just then their attention was drawn by the signal whistle of the steamer.

"Some one is going to land," said Mrs. Grey, stepping upon one of the porch benches to look over the shrubbery to the beach below.

"I think I can guess who it is. It is your clerical admirer, my dear Mrs. Grey," said Emma, with an arch smile.

A deep blush tinged the young widow's cheek, as she murmured:

"Do not mock me, dearest! You know that my heart is buried in the grave of my dear husband."

"Oh, pardon me! pardon me! my words were very thoughtless!"

The widow put her arms around the maiden and kissed her, for all answer.

"The boat has landed," said Mrs. Grey.

And as she spoke a crunching step was heard through the brushwood. And presently, sure enough, the slight figure of the Rev. Mr. Lyle was seen rapidly approaching the house.

He bowed to Miss Cavendish, and shook hands with her first. And then he turned and offered his hand to Mrs. Grey, who received it with grave and gentle courtesy.

"I hope you are both quite well," he said.

"Quite; thanks," answered Emma.

"And you?" inquired the widow, with tender glance and pathetic tone, that in no way belonged to the heart that was buried in the grave of her husband.

"I! Ah!" sighed the minister, with a meaning look.

"Mrs. St. John is in the drawing room. I will go and let her know that you are here," said Miss Cavendish, bowing and retreating into the house.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SYMPATHETIC FRIEND

As soon as the minister and the widow were left alone, he took her hand, and looking earnestly into her beautiful face, murmured in a faltering voice:

"You ask me how I am! Ah, Mary, how can I be, with this agonizing uncertainty torturing my life?"

"Hush! hush! There need be no uncertainty if you would take my first answer once for all. You know what that was: 'My heart is buried with my husband; I cannot love again,'" she answered.

"Yes, yes; but you are so kind and good as to add that you liked, and even esteemed me. And I urged you by that liking and esteem to give me some hope, however slight, that at some time, however distant, you might give me the blessed privilege of wiping all tears from your dear eyes, and devoting my life to making yours, if not loving and happy, at least sheltered and peaceful. For without such hope, I felt that I should die. And what was your reply, beloved?"

"Weakly and miserably I answered that, at some period of the far future, if I should live so long, and if I could so school my broken heart, I might possibly give you my poor empty hand. I am sorry for it now. I implore you to forgive me."

"And upon that hope I have lived, but suffered—oh, how intensely! The suspense is becoming intolerable. I beseech you to end it."

"I will give you this one promise at least—to marry you, if ever I marry at all."

"Heaven bless you for these words, dear love! With this I will try to be content," he said, fervently pressing her hand to his lips.

The next day, in the morning, Mr. Lyle preached in the schoolroom to a well-pleased young congregation. In the afternoon he went and preached to the negro mission church, three miles up the country. He returned to a late tea, and spent the evening in the drawing room in conversation with Mrs. Grey. On Monday he took the down steamer to the city. And the young girls said among themselves what a pity it was that "Mrs. Grey's heart was buried in the grave of her dead husband," when poor,

dear Mr. Lyle was so good and so nice, and so devoted to her.

Mr. Lyle was not the only victim of the childlike widow's charms. The old French master, the middle-aged German master and the young dancing-master were all stricken. These poor gentlemen did not reside within the walls of the school, but had lodgings in the village, a mile inland, whence each came twice a week to give lessons. No two of them came on the same day. Monsieur Le Compte came on Mondays and Thursdays; Mynheer Von Hegel on Tuesdays and Fridays; and Signor Balletini on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Thus it happened that they never met at the institution. And while each one was the devoted lover of the beautiful young widow, he was unsuspicious of the pretensions of the other two.

Mary Grey flirted secretly and demurely with each one, told each, with tears in her beautiful eyes, that her heart was buried in the grave of her husband; but that if ever she should be able to rally from her deep despair, or marry any one at all, she would marry him.

Thus, while falsely dealing and cruelly trifling with the honest and manly love of her suitors, she contrived to retain their confidence and esteem.

Entering Emma's chamber one evening, she found her in tears. She seized the opportunity to play the sympathetic friend; and sitting down by the distressed girl she took her hands and said, softly: "What is the matter, darling?"

Emma looked up, and smiled through her tears as she pointed to an open letter upon which she had been leaning.

"No ill news, I hope, sweetest?" asked the widow, in caressing tones.

"No, no very ill news, and nothing more than I expected. Yet, indeed, I feel disappointed and saddened. My father has lost his re-election," said Emma, quietly.

"Ah, I am so grieved!" murmured Mary Grey, in deeply sympathetic tones.

"It is not really worth sorrow or regret. And if my dear father could only be made to think so, I should not feel either," said Emma. "As for myself, I do not regret that this will be our last winter in town. I do not like city life or public life. I love rural life and rural work. And now come out with me, and let us take a walk down by the river side."

That evening Emma Cavendish spent in writing to her father, sympathizing with him in his late disappointment, but at the same time using every argument that her young wisdom could suggest to convince him that it was much better for him to have a rest from public life for a year or two, and predicting that he would certainly be called from his retirement to take a seat in the Senate of the United States, or in the Cabinet at Washington. Finally she asked his permission to join him, for the Christmas holidays, in the city, and to bring with her two friends from the school whom she had already, in anticipation of his consent, taken the liberty to invite.

Within three days afterward, Miss Cavendish received an answer from her father, thanking her for her sympathy and condolence; assuring her that no political disappointment could ever seriously affect his happiness, so long as he had his wise and loving little Emma to console him, and finally telling her to bring as many young friends as she pleased from the school, as he would welcome them all. And this being the last winter of his official residence in the city, he should make the most of his time and opportunity in conferring as much benefit and pleasure as possible upon his daughter and her young guests.

Emma, in delight, showed this letter to Mrs. Grey and to Laura Lytton, who were very much pleased with the cordial invitation.

"Just see what he writes," said Emma, reading from his letter. " 'Bring as many young friends as you please.

They shall all be cordially welcome.' And now, Mrs. Grey and dear Laura, I have a mind to add one more to our Christmas party, if you have no objection."

"Being nominated by you, she will sure to be agreeable to us," observed Laura.

"I don't know. You must hear who she is first," suggested Emma.

"Let us hear then," laughed Laura.

"Electra," answered Emma, softly.

"Electra!" simultaneously exclaimed both her companions.

"There, I thought I would surprise and perhaps disgust you. Never mind. I can leave the child out this time, and perhaps invite her on some future occasion," said Miss Cavendish, gravely.

"You mistake us very much, dear Emma. We are surprised indeed, but so far from being disgusted we are delighted," said Mrs. Grey, earnestly.

"Yes, indeed. It is perfectly delicious to think how that poor friendless girl will enjoy herself with us!" eagerly exclaimed Laura.

"And it is so lovely in you, you good, brave girl, to think of inviting her. No one but you would venture to do so," added Mrs. Grey, caressing Emma.

CHAPTER XXII

ELECTRA

THIS Electra, whom Emma Cavendish kindly intended to invite to spend the Christmas holidays with her at her father's house, was a child of mystery, if not of sin.

And this is all that was then known of her.

A few days previous to the conversation related in the last chapter, on a very cold day, the down steamer stopped

at a landing opposite the island for fuel, as those steamers often did.

While there she sent off a boat with two passengers, and a quantity of luggage, whom she landed on the island.

Then came up to the house a venerable, elderly gentleman, with a commanding figure, white hair and a long white beard, and dressed in a suit of clerical black.

He had in his charge a young girl, with a very dark complexion and very black hair and eyes, and who was protected from the weather by the richest sable furs.

He sent in his card and afterward introduced himself to Mrs. St. John as the Rev. Dr. Jones, and presented his companion as his ward, Miss Electra, the daughter of deceased friends, and explained that he wished to place her under Mrs. St. John's charge.

He apologized for bringing her so near the end of the current term, instead of waiting for the commencement of the next ensuing one, by saying that he was on the eve of a voyage to Europe, and wished, before his departure, to leave his young charge in a safe and permanent home.

He then paid in advance for a year's board and tuition with all the "extras," and placed an additional sum of money in the hands of Mrs. St. John, to be used at her discretion for the incidental expenses of Miss Electra, explaining that, as he would be absent for at least eight or ten months, he considered it best to leave ample funds in the hands of the principal for the benefit of her pupil. And then he suddently started up, saying that he had to catch the steamer before her departure from the wood-wharf opposite, and that the rowboat was waiting for him at the island landing.

And he kissed and solemnly blessed Electra, gravely bowed the lady, murmuring that he would write to her from the city, and hurried away before Mrs. St. John could recover from her astonishment.

Electra was about fifteen years of age, tall, slender and perfectly formed, with an elegantly shaped head, set upon

a stately, graceful neck. She had lustrous blue-black hair, eyebrows and eyelashes, and intensely brilliant blue-black eyes, that flashed with every glance. She had glowing crimson cheeks and crimson lips, and gleaming white teeth. And every time she spoke or glanced, the simultaneous flash of her eyes and gleam of her teeth had something startling in their expression.

"Sit down, my dear. Do not be afraid," said Mrs. St. John.

"I am not afraid," flashed Electra, taking her seat.

"I think, my dear," began the lady, slightly wincing before this keen maiden—"I think your guardian omitted to tell me your family name. He introduced you simply as 'Miss Electra,' did he not?"

"Yes, madam; for I have no family name, and no family, as far as I know—at least none that acknowledge me."

Mrs. St. John was struck perfectly dumb. But Mrs. Grey who was in the room came to her help by asking sweetly:

"Will you tell us then, my dear, where you were brought up?—if you have no objection, I mean."

"Oh, no, I have no objection at all. Indeed, I mean to tell you all about myself, so that I may not stay here under false pretenses," gleamed Electra, so vividly that Mrs. Grey shut her eyes for a moment before she said:

"Go on then, my dear."

"Well then, I never knew my father or my mother, or my real name. When I first knew myself I was a very little child, very thin and pale, half-naked and half-starved, all eyes and hair, like a famished bird that is all feathers."

"What a comparison! But where did you live?"

"In a miserable open sewer, miscalled a street, in the Fourth Ward of New York—a place of rags and filth and putrescence; of drunkenness, disease and famine; of swearing, fighting and thieving; a place full of sickening smells and horrid sights and fearful sounds—a hell on earth."

"Electra! Electra! you must not use such strong language!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, stopping her ears.

"I cannot tell my story without it. But of course I can be silent," flashed the girl.

"Go on, child! Go on!" said Mrs. St. John, in an agitated voice.

"One night," continued the girl, "the thieving, drinking, swearing and fighting performances in the sewer, miscalled a street, were varied with a murder. The one-eyed man, with whom I lived, in a drunken frenzy killed the red-nosed woman whom he called 'wife.' He was dragged off to the Tombs. She was buried in the pauper graveyard; and I was taken to heaven."

"To heaven?" echoed Mrs. St. John and Mrs. Grey in a breath, both looking at the strange girl as if they thought her insane.

"To heaven," repeated Electra, emphatically. "Indeed, without a metaphor, it seemed to me to be heaven. It was only the Infants' Nursery on Randall's Island, in East River, New York. But I was a four-year-old child taken out of a cellar in a sewer, miscalled a street, and I thought it was heaven!"

"Poor baby!" sighed Mrs. St. John.

"I went regularly to school. I learned the story of the strange earth on which we live, and of the nations who inhabited it. I learned music and drawing and elocution. I led a happy life on the island until one day, when I was about fourteen years of age, I was notified that if I were not soon claimed by some one who could show a better right to me, I should be bound out to service by the commissioners of charity."

"Poor child!" murmured Mrs. St. John.

"It was a terrible hearing for me. I did not believe I had a friend in the world outside the island. I had no reason to believe so. The woman who had been the tyrant of my infancy was killed. The man who had killed her was in the State prison for life. There were regular visit-

ing days on the island, when the children's friends, if they had any, came to see them, but no one ever came to see me. I had therefore no hope for any escape from the dreaded binding out, until one day there came a visitor to me."

CHAPTER XXIII

A CHANGE OF FORTUNE

"AH!" said Mrs. Grey, with a sigh of relief.

"Yes," continued Electra, "and a visit to me was a very surprising event, and not altogether unalarming, either. When I was taken down into the matron's parlor, I found waiting for me this Rev. Dr. Jones, the same old gentleman who brought me here."

Now, Mrs. St. John drew her chair nearer to the young speaker, and listened intently.

"When I saw the gentleman, my fears took another direction. I thought he had come to get me bound to him as a servant; but he looked very kindly at me, and held out his hand, and called me to him by a name I had never heard before, Electra. And, of course, I did not understand, and so I stood still until he said again:

" 'Electra! come to me, my child.'

"Then I went to him. And he took my hand and drew me closer, and gazed long and silently into my eyes, and then at length inquired:

" 'Electra, my poor child, why did the commissioners give you such a strange name as Sarah Kidd?"

" 'Because, sir, I never had any name of my own.'

" 'How was that, poor child?'

" 'Because, in Rat Alley, where the commissioners found me, I used to live with a woman named Sal, and the people there used to call me Sal's kid, meaning Sal's child. They never called me anything else but Sal's kid. I think that

was the reason the commissioners called me Sarah Kidd,' I said.

" 'Of course, that is not your name. Your name is Electra,' he told me, putting his hand under my chin, and gazing wistfully into my face.

" 'Electra—what, sir?' I then ventured to inquire.

" 'Nothing,' he answered. 'You have no other name—can have no other until, at some future time, when it shall please Heaven to provide you with a good husband.'

"I looked down, feeling very much troubled, indeed, for I knew very well what having no name meant. And here was this kind old gentleman justifying the affronts that used to be put upon me in Rat Alley. He did not notice my trouble, but soon looked at me very kindly, and asked:

" 'Electra, how would you like to leave this place with me, and enter as a pupil into some young ladies' boarding-school, where you can be educated in the higher branches of knowledge, and trained in the more elegant accomplishments?'

" 'Oh, I should like that above everything in this world!' I answered, with perfect truth.

" 'Then I will take you away to-day,' he said.

"The necessary arrangements were soon completed. He sent over to Harlem and got for me a very neat cloth cloak, that nearly covered my coarse asylum dress, and also a pretty felt hat, and a pair of kid gloves. Then, with some tears, I took leave of the friends of many years, and left the island with my guardian. We crossed the river in a ferry-boat and took the Second Avenue cars to the city.

"At Fourteenth Street we left the car and walked to a fine hotel, where my guardian had rooms already engaged.

"Well, madam, we dined and went out in a carriage, and did a wonderful sight of business that afternoon. We went to a ladies' bazaar, where I selected dress goods of the uniform colors worn in this school, but of the finest materials, and I was measured for a dozen that were to be made up and sent home within twenty-four hours. Then

we went to a silversmith, where my guardian himself selected for me the goblets, spoons, and forks of the heaviest make. He directed these to be engraved with my name and sent in the next afternoon. We then called at a book store and selected the class books; and, lastly, to a trunk-maker's, where I bought three trunks.

"The next day, Wednesday, I spent in packing my trunks, as fast as the goods came in. The dresses came last of all, so they were put in the trays, on the top.

"That afternoon my guardian settled the hotel bill, and we took the evening train to Washington, connected with the morning train to Richmond, where we immediately took the down steamer to Mount Ascension, where we arrived this Thursday afternoon. My guardian was obliged to hurry off in the way he did, in order to return to New York in time to secure the steamer that sails on Saturday for Liverpool. This is my story, Mrs. St. John," concluded Electra.

"And now, my dear," said Mrs. St. John, very gravely, "Mrs. Grey and myself will respect the confidence that you repose in us, and will never speak of the wrongs and sufferings of your infancy. And I would earnestly counsel you also to maintain a wise reticence toward your young companions. They have not had the same experience that you have had, and they may misunderstand and misinterpret you. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, dear Mrs. St. John, I understand you, and I will be as reserved about my life as I possibly can be with truth. But if I should be obliged to speak at all, I must always tell the truth," said Electra.

Such was the introduction of Electra into the school.

Upon examination, she was found to be too deficient in education to be placed in any but the lowest, or first class —the highest being the third. Consequently, though in age she was so near Emma Cavendish and Laura Lytton, while in attainments she was far from them, she was assigned a classroom in another part of the academy, and a

bed in the dormitory in the opposite wing of the house from those occupied by our two young friends.

She soon became a general favorite with her school-fellows, and also with the professors, who admired her more than they admired any other inmate of the house, always excepting the general fascinator, Mrs. Grey.

But at length some curious schoolgirl noticed that the new pupil was never called by any other name than Electra.

And so one day during the recreation hour, when all the school was assembled on the lawn in front of the building, this girl suddenly inquired of the new pupil:

"What's your name besides Electra? I never hear any one call you anything but Electra, or Miss Electra. What's your other name?"

"My guardian never gave me any other name," answered the girl, flushing crimson.

"Oh, I don't mean another Christian name. I mean your surname, your family name, your father's and mother's name, you know. Everybody has that, of course. Now, what is yours?"

"I do not remember my parents, as I told you. My guardian calls me simply Electra, and nothing else," answered the girl, with burning cheeks.

"How queer!" exclaimed the curious young daughter of Eve.

But from that hour Electra's companions, with the thoughtless cruelty of schoolgirls, neglected and avoided her.

Mrs. St. John, the lady principal of the school, of course had her secret likings and dislikings, among so large a number of pupils; and it was inevitable that this should be so, since it was impossible to love equally well the forward and stupid, and the gentle and intelligent. And Electra was one of her secret favorites; but nothing of this preference appeared in her manner. She treated all her pupils with equal justice.

Great, however, was her surprise, when one morning Emma Cavendish came to her and said:

"Mrs. St. John, if you please, I should like to invite Miss Electra to go home with me to spend the Christmas holidays."

"My dear! why, what are you thinking of?" exclaimed the lady, completely thrown off her guard.

"I hope there is no objection, madam," said Emma, respectfully.

"I must think about it, my dear. The case of Miss Electra is rather a peculiar one. I will think about it, and let you know this evening," said Mrs. St. John, gravely.

And Emma was forced to submit to the delay, yet she had very little doubt as to the result; and therefore she was more pleased than surprised when Mrs. St. John sent for her in the evening, and said:

"My dear, I have decided to accept for Electra your kind invitation to Richmond."

"I thank you, madam," said Emma, very demurely, and the interview ended.

It was a brilliant, sparkling winter day, when at length four capacious sleighs, well furnished with woolen rugs and hot bricks, stood before the foot of the lowest terrace, waiting for the party that were to go to Wendover. There were nineteen young ladies in all belonging to this set. Emma Cavendish and her three guests occupied one sleigh together. And the other fifteen girls were equally distributed among the remaining three sleighs.

They set off, accompanied by the merry ringing of the sleigh bells and the waving of pocket handkerchiefs. And after a most exhilarating and delightful ride, or rather flight, over the silvery-frosted snow, they reached the Wendover railway station, in good time to secure the up train.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GOVERNOR AND THE CIRCE

GOVERNOR CAVENDISH received his guests with old-fashioned courtesy, and took pains to see that they enjoyed their vacation.

The next few days were clear, cold, and brilliant, with splendid sunshine and sparkling snow. The sleighing was perfect, and Governor Cavendish had in his carriage house two handsome sleighs, one a spacious vehicle capable of carrying a party of half a dozen persons, and the other a snug little *tête-à-tête* jumper that would accommodate but two, the driver and his companion.

It often happened that Mrs. Grey shivered and complained of cold, and deplored her own sensitiveness to the frost, and declined to accompany the youthful party on their sleighing frolics. And always on these occasions Governor Cavendish also remained indoors, cheerfully declaring that his daughter and her young companions would be quite safe under the care of old Jerome, his veteran coachman.

The young people would always return in time for the late dinner, when there was almost always one or more guests to be entertained.

Mrs. Grey exerted all her talent to entertain and amuse her host.

She read with a power and pathos that proved her capable of success in the highest walks of dramatic art. And this was the gift of nature, rather than of education.

She was not an accomplished musician, but she played and sang the old-fashioned songs of Charles Cavendish's childhood, which he declared he loved more than the finest operatic music he had ever heard.

And whether she read from the poets, or whether she

played and sang, he listened to her, spellbound and delighted.

At length even the frank and guileless young lady of the house began to suspect what the lawyer's practical daughter had long known—that her father was in love with the beautiful widow.

"I wish I had followed your advice," Emma confessed to Laura. "But it is too late now. And besides, I feel that there is a certain impropriety in our discussing this subject. My honored father is wise enough to judge for himself."

In the hall they were joined by the subject of their late discussion, looking lovely in her simple morning toilet. And then they all went down together to the breakfast-room, where the master of the house was awaiting them.

"What is the program for to-day, my dears?" he inquired, after he had cordially greeted each one, and they were all seated around the table.

"The snow is melting too fast for the sleigh; so we thought we would stay indoors and keep you company until twelve o'clock, and then order the carriage and return some of the calls that have been made us," answered Emma.

"Quite right, my love," said her father.

"Will you go with us, Mrs. Grey?" inquired Emma.

"No, dear; you must pardon me. I am so susceptible to atmospheric changes. I dare not go out in damp weather."

Emma was silent, but her father said quite seriously:

"Your charming friend is a very delicate exotic, my dear Emma, and not a hardy damask-rose like you."

"Will you go with us, governor?" quickly inquired Electra.

"No, dear; I rather think not. An old gentleman like myself would scarcely add to the liveliness of your youthful party. And it is not necessary. Emma can take my card case with her," said Mr. Cavendish.

Electra and Laura Lytton exchanged glances. Emma looked very gravely down into her plate.

"I hope you are not disappointed, Em?" said the governor.

"No, dear father. I wish you to consult your own comfort first of all," gravely answered the girl.

And her father in some manner perceived more meaning in her reply than the words seemed to express, for he sighed, and said:

"I always consider your happiness, my dear child."

And then, similarly, Emma perceived more in her father's remark than his words seemed to convey.

After breakfast the youthful party separated for a short hour, each going about her own business.

Laura Lytton went to her room to make up a package of Christmas presents to send to her little country cousins, Octavia and Ulrica. She meant to send them by express to Wendover, to the care of Craven Kyte, whom she felt sure would willingly take the trouble to convey them to Lytton Lodge.

Laura had scarcely completed her task when Emma Cavendish opened the door and came into the room, bringing a letter, which she gayly tossed into Laura's lap as she, smiling, explained:

"Just brought by a messenger—a private messenger—from the Planter's Hotel, my dear. Is it a love letter?" she archly inquired.

"Oh, yes, it is a love letter—a love letter from a true lover—my dear, only brother!" exclaimed Laura gladly, as she unfolded the paper. But the instant after her face became very grave.

The letter was as follows:

"PLANTER'S HOTEL, Wednesday.

"MY BELOVED SISTER: I have just arrived here from Lytton Lodge, whither I went immediately from Charlottesville, and where I expected to meet you and

to spend the Christmas holidays in your company. Imagine my disappointment when I was told that you were not there, and not even expected to come. Imagine, if you can, my astonishment and mortification when I learned where you were spending your Christmas—under the very roof of the man who outraged all justice and defied all public opinion by pardoning the murderer of our honored father. Oh, Laura! oh, my sister! if you have any veneration for the memory of our murdered father, any affection for your only brother, I implore you, by that reverence and that affection, to leave the Government House this day, and come to me at this hotel, and let me take you home to Lytton Lodge. It is for this purpose that I have come to the city. I would go to the house also to fetch you out, only I cannot endure to approach the home of him who pardoned our father's murderer. But I will send a carriage for you this afternoon, giving you only time to pack your effects, and then I will await you here. Your affectionate, but deeply wounded brother,

ALDEN LYTTON."

Laura was in despair. This passionate letter had come like a blight to all her comfort, and all her plans of pleasure.

She opened her writing-desk, and began a note to her brother, in answer to his angry letter.

She wrote as follows:

"GOVERNMENT HOUSE, Wednesday Morning.

MY DEAREST BROTHER: I am delighted to know that you are in town; or, rather, I should be entirely so if I were not too deeply pained by your letter. I am here as the guest of Miss Cavendish, the dearest girl friend that I have in this world. She loves me entirely, and is exceedingly kind to me. I cannot distress her by the abrupt departure you require me to make. Besides, dear Alden,

my intuitions assure me that you are utterly mistaken in your judgment of Governor Cavendish. He is a good, honorable and conscientious man; and whatever he has done has been done from the purest and highest motives. When you send the carriage for me I will go to you; but only for a visit. Then, in a few days, when I can find some fair excuse, that will not pain Emma, for shortening my visit, I will return with you to Lytton Lodge. Your loving sister, LAURA."

Emma Cavendish, on leaving Laura Lytton, had gone immediately to her father's study, where she found him not very particularly engaged over the morning papers.

"Papa," she said. "what do you think? Laura Lytton's brother has just come to the city. He has been at the university, you know; but now he is here for the holidays, and to be near his sister, I suppose."

"Yes, dear, most likely."

"Papa, love, will you do something for me?"

"Anything, my girl."

"I want you to go to the Planter's Hotel and call on Laura's brother, and invite him to come here and make this house his home during his stay in the city. I know Laura would be so delighted to have him. Will you do this for me, papa, dear?"

"Certainly, my child. It is a very natural and proper thing to do; and one which I certainly should have done even without your kind and thoughtful suggestion."

CHAPTER XXV

AN EXPLANATION AND ALDEN LYTTON

GOVERNOR CAVENDISH, in compliance with the wishes of his beloved daughter, ordered his carriage and drove to the Planter's Hotel.

He inquired for Mr. Alden Lytton, and being answered that the young gentleman was at the house and in his room, sent up his card.

In a very few moments the messenger returned, bringing back the visitor's card and a most discourteous message, to the effect that:

"Mr. Alden Lytton declines to receive Governor Cavendish."

"Oh, he does!" murmured the governor, with an indulgent smile. "I can well understand the reason."

Then he took the rejected card from the messenger, drew a pencil from his pocket and wrote this line:

"I think that you will see me, and be pleased after having done so."

And he gave back the card to the messenger, saying:

"Take this to Mr. Lytton. I shall follow you."

Up several flights of stairs, and along several long passages, the usher led the way, the governor following, until he opened a door at the end of the last passage.

Governor Cavendish followed him into the room.

Alden was seated at a small table, writing. He looked up, and seeing his visitor, started with surprise, flushed to his temples, and exclaimed:

"I thought I ordered the waiter to——"

"Decline my visit, in your name. Yes, young sir, you did. And the man faithfully obeyed your orders, yet I am here," said Mr. Cavendish, composedly advancing to the table.

Alden Lytton turned white with anger, and his fine dark eyes flashed. He could not speak.

"You may retire," said the governor, with a dignified gesture, to the usher, who immediately withdrew and shut the door behind him.

"Since you are here, as you say, will you do me the honor to be seated, sir?" said Alden Lytton, with freezing hauteur, as he placed a chair for his unwelcome visitor.

"Thanks, yes; for I have walked up four pairs of stairs

and through three long halls," answered the governor, with a smile, as he took the offered seat.

"I wait to be told, sir, what has procured me the undesired honor of this visit," said Alden, coldly.

"My dear, young friend, leave formality and sarcasm, if you can. I came here to make acquaintance with the son of my old college mate and friend, Henry Lytton. You know, I suppose, that your late father and myself were friends?" inquired Governor Cavendish, smilingly.

"Yes, sir. And I think it so much the more inexplicable—to use no stronger term—that you should have pardoned his murderer."

"My good young friend, I never pardoned his murderer."

"Sir!"

"I never pardoned your father's murderer, and never would have done so," solemnly repeated the governor.

"Oh, Governor Cavendish! Really, really your fine intellect must be somewhat obscured, or you must imagine mine to be so! I can refer you to the printed copy of the pardon, and even to the original parchment, which is no doubt preserved in the archives of the State House or the prison," replied Alden, with bitter and scornful incredulity.

"You can show me my official signature to the pardon of poor Victor Hartman, but not of your father's assassin. Poor Hartman never committed the crime for which he was condemned to die," said the governor, solemnly.

Alden Lytton laughed sardonically, as he replied:

"The old plea, the old excuse, the old story! The anonymous letters declaring his innocence, which even the criminal himself laughed to scorn! Why, the man confessed the crime!"

"He confessed it, because he thought he committed it! Such false self-crimination has occurred before. Many such cases are on record," said Governor Cavendish.

Alden Lytton made a gesture of utter incredulity and

contempt. But the governor had patience with him and continued calmly:

"I will tell you what really did happen that fatal night. When the wretched man, fainting from famine and crazed with alcohol, attempted to strike his benefactor, he utterly missed his mark, and fell forward on his face, and speedily became insensible. Meanwhile Mr. Lytton, after administering a kick to the prostrate and unconscious form of his assailant, walked on his way, followed by one who had really determined upon his death—one who had, or thought he had, a deeper wrong to avenge than any real or fancied injury suffered by poor Hartman."

Here Alden Lytton started, and bent eagerly and breathlessly forward.

"Mr. Lytton walked on nearly a quarter of a mile from the spot where he had left Hartman. And his steps were tracked by the assassin until they came to a lonely and murky part of the road, when, with one fatal blow from behind, falling upon the back of his head, Henry Lytton was struck down dead. You know that the testimony of the physicians at the inquest proved that his death had ensued instantly from the single blow."

"Yes, yes. Oh, Heaven!" groaned the young man, covering his face with his hands.

"It grieves me so to reopen all your wounds, my dear Alden; but justice to the innocent obliges me to do it."

"Pray, go on, sir! This is a most unexpected revelation.

"Goaded by remorse, and fettered by fear, the real murderer took the middle course of writing anonymous letters to the executive, declaring the innocence of Victor Hartman. I paid no sort of attention to these repeated letters, which annoyed without impressing me. So time went on, until the day of the execution was near at hand. Then I signed the death warrant, and left the city for my country home."

"It was said, to avoid seeing and hearing too much of the impending execution," put in Alden.

"It was truly so said. I reached Blue Bluffs on the night of Thursday before the execution, which was to take place on Friday noon. On the very night of my arrival at home I was surprised by the arrival of a visitor, who sent in a card without a name, and bearing on its face only these words:

"'The writer of the anonymous letters.'

"I went to my study and sent for the visitor. Namelessly he was shown in by the servant, who immediately closed the door and retired. I arose to receive him, and saw before me, as I supposed, a perfect stranger; but he lifted his hat, and turned to the light, and I recognized him."

"You knew him!" burst forth Alden.

"Unfortunately I knew him, and knew but little good of him. But he was then so pale, haggard, and suffering, that I pitied him. I made him sit down and gave him a glass of wine. He seemed terribly agitated and hurried. He repeated that he was the writer of the anonymous letters, and that 'Victor Hartman was guiltless of the murder of Henry Lytton, and that he himself could prove it to me.'

"I told him that he must prove it to me most positively, before I could interfere to arrest the course of the law. Whereupon he groaned and wrung his hands in agony. At length he said he wished to make a communication under the seal of secrecy, a communication that would clear Victor Hartman from suspicion. I gave him the promise of secrecy to some extent. And then, Alden, he told me a tale of real or fancied injury, most hideous to hear. And then confessed himself the assassin of Henry Lytton, with so much particularity as to time, place, and circumstance, that he enforced perfect conviction of his truth on my mind."

"And you failed to arrest him on the spot!" exclaimed Alden, indignantly.

"My first impulse was to do so. But I remembered the promise by which I was bound, and to which the man held me. There was absolutely nothing that I could do with the guilty man but leave him to the retribution of Divine Providence. But I could save the guiltless one! So I allowed my strange visitor to depart. And I myself set out that same night to Wendover, and telegraphed from the station to the sheriff in the city to suspend the execution until further orders. And then I took th midnight train to the city, which I reached in the afternoon of the next day. You know the rest. I saved the innocent convict, and lost my own popularity by that one act of pardon. Now, my dear young friend, you perceive that I never pardoned your father's assassin. And now you see, also, how the seal of secrecy closes my lips, so that I cannot divulge the name of the real criminal. I, too, have suffered from this secrecy. I have lost my re-election. At the end of my term I must go out of office for what public opinion has denounced as a gross abuse of the pardoning power."

"Victor's case seems the hardest one of all. And you cannot tell me the name of the real criminal?"

"You must see that I cannot."

"I see; but at least you may tell me the provocation this miscreant imagined he had received."

"My young friend, I would rather not speak of it. It would but give you deep pain," said the governor, gravely.

"Yet let me hear it. Tell me plainly the nature of the provocation this man received, or imagined that he had received, at my father's hands," insisted Alden.

"A ruined daughter," solemnly answered the governor.

Alden started, and clutched the edge of the table at which they sat together. Every vestige of color fled from his face; he gasped for breath.

"Alden! my good young friend, bear up! Do not let

this affect you so much. The man was probably a monomaniac, crazed, perhaps, by the loss of his child, and as ready to charge that loss upon one man as upon another," said Governor Cavendish, kindly.

"I know whom you mean now, Governor Cavendish!" he said, in a choking voice. "I know whom you mean, as well as if you had named the murderer!"

CHAPTER XXVI

IN A DILEMMA

While Laura was fretting her soul, the little ormolu clock on the mantel shelf struck two, and warned her that she would very soon be summoned to luncheon. And her eyes, still red with weeping, she feared would betray her feelings. So she got up and bathed them, and continued to bathe them until she heard a rap at her chamber door.

Emma was standing there, looking very lovely in her pretty home dress of pale blue challie, with embroidered cambric chemisette and under-sleeves, and with her golden hair looking still brighter in its golden net. Her face was all smiles as she accosted her friend with:

"Come, darling! We are waiting luncheon for you. Didn't you hear the bell? And papa has brought a visitor home with him: a gentleman he met this morning at the Planter's Hotel. A rival for himself, I am afraid, and a new victim for the pretty widow, who has already 'eyed' the unhappy youth!"

While Emma rattled on in the gayety of her heart, Laura found time to recover her composure. She then joined her friend, and they went downstairs together.

Luncheon was usually served in the cozy crimson parlor in the left wing of the mansion. A hall servant in attendance opened the door, and the two girls passed in.

The first things that Laura noticed were, of course, the elegant little luncheon-table and the glowing sea-coal fire. And the next the beautiful face of the young widow, who was seated in the embrasure of the bay window, talking to a gentleman, who was bending over her in an attitude of the deepest devotion.

As the young girls crossed the room toward the fire, this gentleman raised his head and turned around, revealing to the astonished eyes of Laura the face of her dear brother Alden.

At the same instant a soft peal of silvery laughter broke from the beautiful lips of Emma Cavendish, as she said:

"I thought I would surprise you with this unexpected Christmas gift from dear papa!"

"Yes, my dear Laura," added the governor, rising from his easy-chair by the fire, "I have brought your brother as the most acceptable Christmas gift I could think of offering you. He has consented to make us all happy by spending the holidays with us."

While the governor yet spoke, Alden drew his sister to his heart and greeted her with a brotherly kiss.

Laura looked from one to the other, too much astonished and delighted to be able to answer one word.

"Come, let us take seats," said Emma, smilingly, advancing to her place at the head of the table.

"Dear Alden, I am glad to see you! You must explain all this to me by and by. And, oh, Mr. Cavendish, I do thank you so much! You have made me so happy!" said Laura, as soon as she found her voice.

After luncheon was over, kind and thoughtful Emma Cavendish, knowing that the brother and sister would like a *tête-à-tête* after so many months' separation, so managed matters that they were left alone together in the back drawing room.

Then Laura, who could scarcely conceal her curiosity and impatience, plumply inquired of her brother:

"What had wrought such a wonderful change in his

sentiments toward Governor Cavendish, as not only to alter his views about her visit to the Government House, but also to induce himself to become her fellow-visitor."

Alden did not wish to tamper with the trust the governor had placed in him by confiding to Laura any part of the strange story told him by Mr. Cavendish, so he merely replied:

"My dear sister, the governor condescended to give me an explanation which comprised such good and sufficient reasons for the course he took, as not only fully exonerated him from all blame, but raised him so high in my esteem as almost to bring me to his feet for forgiveness of my rash and presumptuous misjudgment of him. That is all I can tell you, my dear Laura."

Alden Lytton, a pure-minded, warm-hearted, high-spirited youth of twenty years, was just at the age to be charmed, dazzled and bewildered by the circle of beauty around him.

Had he been left in freedom of choice, he would naturally and properly have fallen in love with the fair young daughter of his distinguished host, for Emma Cavendish was the most lovely, not only in person, but in mind and manners, of all the young beauties at the Government House. But she was also adorned with graceful, maidenly reserve, that held her youthful admirers all at a reverential distance. And Alden Lytton at this time, much as he admired Emma Cavendish, would as soon have thought of aspiring to the affections of a princess royal as to the regards of the governor's beautiful daughter.

And on the other hand, Mary Grey allured him, with all the witching wiles of which she was the perfect mistress.

And he yielded to the spell.

For the first time in her short life, the selfish, sensual and designing woman really loved!—loved with one of those sudden, unreasonable, irresistible passions that some-

times kindle at the first meeting of the eyes. And she felt that she must have his love, or lose her own life!

One night when the governor's family circle and guests were assembled in the drawing room, she allowed the gray-haired magnate to sit by her side and whisper graceful compliments into her ear, but—to use Emma's quaint expression—she "eyed" young Alden Lytton across the room until, between the witchery of her bewildering glances and the jealousy excited by the governor's marked attentions, the young victim nearly lost his senses.

That night Alden Lytton went to his room disturbed by the first passion of his young life, and haunted by the vision of dark, melting eyes, and the echo of sweet, penetrating tones.

That night Mary Grey went to her room to pace the floor in more raging excitement than famished and furious tigress ever paced her den. She was torn between the madness of her lifelong ambition, and the madness of her sudden and violent passion.

"I could have either," she said, proudly erecting her head—"I could have either the love of the beautiful and beloved youth or the wealth of the distinguished statesman. But I cannot have both!" she exclaimed, smiting her breast—"I cannot have both! Why cannot I have both—the love of the boy and the wealth of the man? Why can't I have all I want in this world, if I am willing to take the consequences?"

She paused in her raging walk and stood still, while her face grew at once livid and fiery, like a burning coal covered with white ashes, and her eyes smoldered and flashed.

"I will have both," she said—"I will have both the love of the boy and the wealth of the man. Yes, though I pay down the price of my soul for them!"

And so saying she went to bed, not to sleep, but to plot—and plot—and plot.

One evening in the Christmas week, when all the young

party from the government house were at a public ball got up for benevolent purposes, and Mrs. Grey was there as their chaperon, and Alden Lytton was there as their escort, while the three young ladies were all engaged in dancing, and Mary Grey and her young adorer were seated together on a side sofa, Alden worshiping her with his eyes, he suddenly whispered:

"Do you know I have been very happy all this week?"

"Have you? I am glad to hear you say so!" her lips answered, but her eyes said ten times warmer things.

"Very, very happy! Have I not been by your side every evening? Every most blessed evening?" he murmured, fondly.

She dropped her eyes under the boy's ardent gaze, and really blushed; for this time she was really in love, and not only pretending to be so.

"Does that make you happy?" at length she murmured, very softly.

"Does that make me happy? It makes my heaven! Oh, May! Ah, forgive me. I did not mean to be so free as to call you 'May.' But then—but then—I always think of you as 'May,' 'sweet May,'" he murmured.

"I love to be called 'May.' No one has ever called me May since my mother died," she whispered, softly.

"Then let me do so, for I love you, May! I love you!" he panted, keeping his eyes fixed upon hers, which fell beneath his fiery glance.

"You are not angry with me?" he breathed, trying to look in her face.

But she turned away her head and drooped her face.

"You are not angry with me?" he pleaded.

Without looking up, with her head still turned away from him, and her face still drooping, she slipped her hand into his, and whispered, softly:

"No, not angry, but so surprised, and oh, so happy!"

He started with a joyous shock; he pressed her hand ardently; he longed to press it to his lips; he wished him-

self and her a thousand miles from the crowded ball-room.

"Dearest May!" he whispered. "My happy week was ushered in by one miserable night of love, jealousy, and torture. Do you remember it? It was the night we all stayed home, and Governor Cavendish sat by you the whole evening. Do you remember it?"

"Oh, yes! I was bored almost to death! Did you not see that I was?"

"No. I only saw that the governor was devoting himself to you. And I was perfectly wretched."

"What! jealous of that old gentleman?" she said, with a light laugh.

"Ah, May! they told me you would marry him."

"Marry him! Why, he's old enough to be my grandfather!" she said, lifting her beautiful, slender, black eyebrows, with an air of consternation.

"Then there is no truth in it, dearest May?"

"Not one bit," she softly answered, stealing her little hand in his.

Again he pressed that small hand ardently, and wished himself and her a thousand miles from the crowded ball-room.

"You make me so happy!" he muttered. "Oh, I bless the day thaf brought me to the city, and to the house where I first met the angel of my life."

"There—hush! here comes Laura," she whispered, as Laura Lytton approached them.

"The best people are all going away now. And Emma thinks we had better retire as soon as this quadrille is over," said Laura.

"I think so, too," agreed Mrs. Grey.

And as soon as Emma and Electra joined them they went to the cloak-room to put on their wraps, while Alden went to order the carriage.

In half an hour they were all at home. Governor Cavendish had gone to bed.

The young girls, tired with dancing, soon went to their rooms.

Alden found an opportunity to say a few words to Mary Grey before they parted for the night.

"You love me! Say so again, dearest!" he whispered.

"I love you," she answered, softly.

"And you will always love me, and some day you will be my wife?"

"I will always love you. And if I ever marry, I will marry only you!"

"Bless you! bless you, dearest!" he ardently whispered, kissing her hand; "bless you, dearest! you have made me so happy!"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SORCERESS

"I HEAR strange rumors of my lovely guest—that at all the balls and parties where she appears, and which she adorns, the beautiful Mrs. Grey is a perpetual and voluntary 'wall-flower,' taking no part in dance or waltz or promenade, scarcely, indeed, even going to the supper-table," said Governor Cavendish, one morning after breakfast, when he found himself alone in the parlor with the pretty widow.

She looked up in his face, and smiled with childlike frankness.

"Is this true?" he inquired.

"It is true," she answered.

"But why do you deny yourself the pleasures suitable to your youth?"

"In the first place, dear friend, as I told you before, I have no taste for them. A youth like mine has been—a youth disciplined by adversity—is cured of all such vanities," she answered, with that sweet blending of a smile

and a sigh that always so deeply touched her lover's compassionate heart.

He looked on her with eyes full of admiration and tenderness, as he answered again:

"Ah, but such a state of mind at your age is most unnatural. I would that I could restore you to your lost youthful zest for innocent youthful pleasures."

She smiled on him, and shook her graceful head as she archly replied:

"Ah, but, you see, it is not only the loss of my taste for gayeties that keeps me in my seat all the evening; it is my responsibilities as a chaperon—duties that are as incumbent upon me at seventeen as if I were seventy. And just now my responsibilities are somewhat complicated," she aded, significantly.

"As for instance?" inquired the governor, elevating his eyebrows.

"As for instance, I have now a young man in my party."

"A very handsome, very poor, and consequently a very ineligible young man, from whom it is my duty, as chaperon, to guard my young ladies."

"I don't understand. Why is Mr. Alden Lytton ineligible?" inquired the governor, elevating his eyebrows.

"Ah, you never were a mother—I mean, a chaperon!" said the widow, shrugging her shoulders.

"No, I never was," meekly confessed the governor.

"Or you would understand that Mr. Alden Lytton, however amiable and accomplished he may be, is a very ineligible acquaintance for young ladies, because he is both very handsome and very poor. Now do you understand?"

"Not a bit."

"Oh, dear me! Well, then, to put it more plainly, this handsome youth, with his big, black eyes and winning ways, might, if he had too free access to her society, have the presumption to fall in love with Miss Cavendish. Now, then."

"Well, but I don't see where the presumption comes in. 'A cat may look at a king,' or at a queen, even."

"But if he should have the—misfortune, we will call it, to fall in love so far above his degree, why, young ladies, even such rare young ladies as Miss Cavendish, are human, and she might possibly return his affection. There, now."

"So she might. It would be quite natural," coolly observed the governor.

"But you would never like him for a son-in-law!" said the widow, in perplexity.

"Why not? He is young, handsome and accomplished enough to please my girl; and talented, high-principled, moral and religious enough to satisfy me."

"But he is poor—absolutely penniless," said the widow, in amazement.

"What of that? Emma will have enough for both."

"You don't mean to say that you would accept as a son-in-law a penniless young man?"

"If he were such a young man as Alden Lytton, and were accepted by my daughter, he certainly would not be rejected by me," said the governor.

"I am amazed," murmured the widow.

"That is because you really have misjudged me, my child. And so you kept your seat, and kept Alden Lytton tied to your apron strings every evening, and all the evening, to prevent him from falling in love with Emma Cavendish and winning her affections?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"But what if he had fallen in love with you, and won your affections?" archly demanded the governor.

"Fallen in love with an old widow like me! Nonsense! You are laughing at me, governor! With an old widow like me!"

"Old widow of seventeen! Yes, you lovely child! It would be the most likely thing in the world that he should do so, and win your affections to boot!" said the governor, gravely.

"Oh, no!" responded the widow, shaking her pretty head, "he could never win my heart. I could never love one so much younger than myself."

"Younger than yourself, my child? Why, he is not younger than you! Quite the contrary! You are but seventeen; he is almost twenty-one."

"Is that so?"

"Of course it is."

"Ah, but then I feel ever so much older than he is. And one thing I know, I never could marry any gentleman unless he was a great deal older than myself, and he was one I could rest on, look up to, esteem, honor, and almost worship!" she said, in a low, earnest tone, lifting her dark eyes to his.

He gazed down upon her eloquent, false face with fond admiration.

"Ah, what man is there on earth," he whispered, "who could deserve such sentiments from you? I would I were that exalted man, sweet Mary!"

In the crisis of a sentimental love scene, there is often a ridiculous interruption. Just as Mary Grey lifted her long lashes and fixed her dark eyes on those of the governor to convey a flattering answer that she could not utter with her lips, a ringing voice was heard outside, exclaiming:

"I'll ask him. I dare say he will!" And the door was thrown open, and Electra sprang in—eyes and teeth flashing and gleaming.

"Well, my dear, what can I do for you?" inquired the governor, endeavoring to recover his composure.

"Let me have 'Blue Blazes' to ride this morning! The girls have all such splendid mounts except me! And me —they wish to put off with 'Swansdown.' Why, I had as lief ride a sofa cushion!" exclaimed Electra, indignantly.

"But, my dear, what is it? I haven't heard. What's up this morning?"

"My temper's up for one thing!" spitefully rejoined Electra.

"Ha! ha! I mean what's afoot?"

"Nobody's afoot; they're all a horseback, except me. And I am to put up with 'Swansdown,' unless you let me ride 'Blue Blazes.' "

"Ah! Does Mr. Alden Lytton accompany you?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And what does he ride?"

" 'Snapdragon.' "

"Ah! a more dangerous beast than 'Blue Blazes.' And Miss Cavendish, my dear, what does she ride?"

"Oh, 'Spitfire'!"

"Whe-ew!" said Mr. Cavendish, with a long whistle. "And Miss Lytton?"

"Oh, she puts up with 'Susy Brown.' "

"Prudent girl! I recommend you to follow her example, and put up with 'Swansdown.' "

"I'd as lief ride a muff."

"As you please, my dear. And now, where are you all going to ride, this frosty morning?"

"Out to the lunatic asylum."

"Oh! Ah! Certainly! To be sure! How stupid of me to ask the question, when I might have known the manifest destination of so crazy a cavalcade!" said the governor, as he arose and rung the bell.

A footman answered his summons.

"Go to the stable and tell the head groom to have the two horses, 'Spitfire' and 'Blue Blazes,' put back into their stalls, and on no account to allow them to be taken out. Tell him further, to saddle 'Swansdown' for Miss Cavendish, and to send to Martin's livery stable for two safe horses for the two other young ladies."

The footman bowed and retired. And the governor turned to Electra.

"You see, my dear, I cannot permit you and Emma to take these wild Mazeppa rides. But as for Mr. Lytton, if

he pleases to venture on 'Snapdragon,' why, I will not interfere with his free agency."

Electra tossed her head defiantly and darted out.

"Ah, my child! I can see what trouble you have with these other children! these wilful children! and you only a child yourself!" sighed the governor, with a fond glance at his companion.

"You must excuse them. They have not been disciplined by sorrow as I have been," she answered, so sweetly, so patiently and cheerfully, that the infatuated man was again about to speak the irrevocable words, when again the door suddenly opened, and all the young equestrian party burst in, looking bright, happy and bewitching in their piquant riding habits and hats.

The governor arose, with a sigh. This was indeed his regular day for receiving visitors on official business, and he was already a few minutes behind time.

"Do you not go and ride with the others?" he inquired of Mrs. Grey.

"I! Oh, no! They do not need me, and I prefer to remain here," artfully answered the siren.

The governor smiled. He was pleased, as she knew he would be, for now he would hurry through with his official business and soon rejoin her, and inevitably speak the words that she thought would seal her brilliant destiny.

"Well, young ladies," he said, with a bow and a smile that made him seem twenty years younger, "I wish you a very delightful ride. I shall hope to see you at dinner."

"Thank you, sir," said Laura, speaking for the party.

Mr. Cavendish bowed again, and left the room.

And the girls went dancing out into the back hall to get their little riding-whips that were standing in the hat-rack there.

In one moment Mary Grey found herself alone, and in the next Alden Lytton, booted and spurred for his ride, stood by her side.

"You are not going with us, my darling?" he whispered, sadly.

"No! Ah, me!" she sighed.

"But why? Oh, why can you not accompany us?"

"Ah, dearest, you know I am only a poor dependent. I must not even accept all the favors that are offered me, lest I wear favor out. I must stay here to-day, and make myself useful. In a word, I must pour out the old gentleman's cocoa at his luncheon time. It is his daughter's duty, of course, but I must do it."

Now this was a falsehood; for Governor Cavendish never took luncheon on cabinet days, but contented himself with a biscuit and a single glass of sherry, which was brought to him in his office. But of course Alden Lytton did not know this; so he breathed his whole noble and loving heart in the aspiration with which he said:

"Ah, darling May! would to Heaven the time were come when I might rescue you from all this! Dear May, I am studying very hard. I shall study harder still for your sake. In a year I hope to graduate in law. Then I shall be called to the bar. With the prestige of my father's great name, and with the diligent use of such abilities as Heaven has bestowed upon me, I hope soon to get into a lucrative practice, and even to rise high in my profession. Then, May, I shall claim this dear hand. You will wait a year or two for your toiling servant, sweet May?" he murmured, caressing her hand.

"I would wait ten years—twenty years for you, my best beloved, my only beloved!" she said, gazing tenderly into his earnest, honest eyes.

And at that moment she almost meant what she said.

"Oh, May, my only joy! how happy you make me! Repeat those words, dearest dear! Tell me again I am your 'only beloved,' that I may know I am not dreaming!" he breathed, drawing her still closer to his side.

"My only beloved," she sighed, in tones that thrilled him through, and remained with him all that day.

The musical laughter and the pattering feet of the young ladies were heard as they were returning.

"They are coming!" he murmured, as he snatched one fiery, impassioned kiss. "Oh, May! oh, sweetest! I shall not enjoy this ride at all without you!"

"Oh, yes, I hope you will," she answered. "For I like to see you enjoy yourself even though I may not be able to share your pleasure. For, ah me! I must stay here and attend to the old gentleman to-day; for he is very infirm, and needs some care besides that of his hired servants. But do you go and take your ride, through this fine frosty atmosphere," she added with a patient smile that went to the youth's heart.

"You are an angel, May! Oh! when will the time come when I may take this angel to my bosom!" he sighed.

"If you please, sir, the hosses is at the door," said the hall footman, making his appearance.

"Come, Alden. We are all ready," called Laura from the front hall.

"Good-by! good-by, dearest one! I am leaving you for a few hours, and I feel as though I were leaving you for years," he whispered in a low voice, as he left the pretty widow.

And thus it was that Mary Grey managed to retain the love and confidence of both her suitors, although they were both under the same roof with her. She contrived never to see both at the same time unless there were several other persons present to divide attention.

When alone with Governor Cavendish she spoke slightingly of Alden Lytton, as a peevish boy much too young to be thought of as a lover by her.

When alone with Alden Lytton she spoke with half contemptuous pity of Governor Cavendish, as an infirm old man whom she could never dream of as a possible suitor.

And she succeeded in making two distinct impressions

upon the mind of each: firstly, that she was an angel; secondly, that this angel loved and esteemed only him to whom she was then speaking.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A NEW YEAR'S RECEPTION

THE great event of the season was the governor's levee on the first of January. It was to be his excellency's last New Year's reception. He was to retire from office on the first of the ensuing March.

On the morning of the last day of the year, while the young ladies of the family circle were in their rooms, engaged in devising the most elegant toilets for the pageantry of the next day, Governor Cavendish sent a message to Mrs. Grey, respectfully soliciting her presence in the drawing room for a private interview on business, for a few minutes.

Mrs. Grey arose and looked into the mirror, smoothed her shining black hair, which was smooth enough already, settled her coquettish little cap, which was well enough before, and went down into the drawing room, where she found Mr. Cavendish alone, and walking up and down the floor.

He paused in his walk, came forward and took her hand and led her to a sofa, and seated himself beside her, saying softly:

"Dearest friend, to-morrow will be a rather trying day for me; to-morrow I shall have to hold my last New Year's reception."

"Yes, I know," answered the pretty widow, in a sympathetic and respectful tone.

"And to-morrow some thousands of gentlemen and ladies, and of men and women who are not gentlemen and

ladies, and of males and females who do not even deserve to be called men and women, will present themselves to me; and every one of their hands, fair or foul, clean or soiled, will have to be shaken."

"How dreadful!" murmured Mary Grey.

"Such, sweet friend, is the character of a chief magistrate's New Year's reception. This is not the worst. Some lady must be by my side. Heretofore I have had my aged mother and my matronly widowed sister with me, to add feminine grace and dignity to what would otherwise seem, to me at least, a most ungraceful and undignified position. Now, however, I have no one. My aged mother is too infirm to leave her home in the country. My sister has married a missionary, and gone to India. And here is my young daughter, who is too youthful to assist me, unless countenanced by the presence of some matronly friend. Now, though you are probably but little if any older than my Emma, still you have been married, and you are widowed, and you bear a matronly title—'Mrs.' Grey. I would, sweet one, that I could persuade you to change that name! But I will not tease you about that just now. You are very good to me as it is. But now I wish to know whether you can aid me in my embarrassment."

"Command me, Mr. Cavendish. You know it would give me the greatest delight to serve you," she answered earnestly.

"Nay, but I would not like to ask you to do anything for my sake which would not be in itself, and independent of me, most agreeable to you."

"Tell me then. What is it?"

"I wish you to stand with me and my young daughter to receive the public to-morrow."

"Why, of course, of course I will do it, with the greatest pride and pleasure," eagerly assented Mrs. Grey; and this time, for a wonder, she spoke the truth.

"I thank you from my heart, dear lady. The task you assume so kindly will be a wearisome and disgusting one,

but, thank Heaven, it will continue but for a few hours, and it will be the last! Now, sweet friend, I will not detain you from your graceful feminine avocations longer," said Mr. Cavendish.

All official New Year's receptions in every capital of the Union, and every year of the century, are exactly alike, and have been described by the reporters *ad nauseam.*

One short extract from the long description in the chief morning paper of the day following what Governor Cavendish considered to be "a necessary, but wearisome and vulgar farce," is all that need be given here. It is this:

"The governor seemed somewhat worn and harassed, probably by the cares of his office. He will, no doubt, be glad to retire from public life at the close of his present term. His excellency was assisted by his fair young daughter, Miss Emma Cavendish, a beautiful and blooming blonde of 'sweet sixteen.' She wore a trained dress of pale blue silk, with an overskirt of rich cardinal point lace, pearl jewelry on her neck and arms, and white rose-buds in her golden hair.

"She received her father's guests with all the grace of girlhood, and yet with a dignity that seemed beyond her years. She was charmingly supported in her onerous duties by the brilliant little beauty, Mrs. Grey, who was elegantly attired in a trained dress of black velvet, with an upper skirt of black satin, trimmed with black Brussels lace. She wore jet jewelry on neck and arms, and the starry white flowers of the fragrant Cape jessamine in her dusky hair."

There was a great deal that preceded, and a great deal that followed this paragraph; but it was all very much in the same style, and need not be repeated.

In another part of the same paper, under the head of "Fashionable Intelligence," was this item:

"APPROACHING MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.—It is rumored that our illustrious chief magistrate will soon lead to the hymeneal altar the beautiful and accomplished Mrs. Grey, now the guest of his daughter at the executive mansion."

CHAPTER XXIX

'TWIXT TWO

THE appearance of the startling paragraph created quite a consternation in the governor's family. As it happened, each one of them read it apart, as the paper chanced to fall into his or her hands, and for some hours not one spoke of it to another.

The first that broke the silence on the subject was Emma Cavendish.

With the paper in her hand, she went into her father's study and laid it before him, and, with her finger on the paragraph, inquired:

"My dear father, is this true?"

The sexagenarian statesman blushed like a schoolgirl, as he answered:

"My dear daughter, it is true, and yet not true. I hope to make it entirely true, but I have not yet spoken very definitely to the lady, of whose favorable response I am, of course, as yet uncertain. But, my beloved child, now that this subject is broached between us, let me know how you feel about it. I would not, even to secure the comfort of my declining years, give my daughter one moment's uneasiness. So come, my child, tell me your thought. Are you willing to receive this sweet, young friend and companion of yours, so near your own age, too, into a still more intimate and permanent relation?"

Emma burst into tears, and wept and sobbed hysteric-

ally, and tried to control herself and suppress her feelings, but utterly failed.

"Come, come, my darling! If this is going to distress you so much, let it drop. I am not in any way, as yet, committed to this lady. I can, now, withdraw with honor. And I will do so, rather than distress you," said Mr. Cavendish, drawing his daughter upon his lap, and pressing her to his bosom.

She threw her arms around his neck, and embraced and kissed him with a daughter's pure and earnest love. And then she said:

"No, no, dearest papa, do not withdraw from any act that is going to make you happy. Dearest papa, I only desire your happiness. I have no thought or wish beyond that."

"But I had hoped that even you, my beloved child, might be made much happier by my marriage with Mary Grey."

To this Emma made no reply.

"How is it with you, child? Tell me your inmost thought," said the governor.

"Dearest papa, I have told you my inmost thought. It is for your happiness alone."

"But in regard to Mrs. Grey, my dear."

"Dear papa, just now I have not confidence in that lady," sadly replied Emma.

"My daughter, you shock me beyond measure! Upon what ground have you lost confidence in Mrs. Grey?"

"Dear papa, I cannot tell you, for I do not know."

"What cause has she given you for this distrust?"

"No cause whatever. By no look, word, or act has Mary Grey justified my doubt of her, which I think is a true instinct, or intuition; but which certainly may be nothing more than jealousy and prejudice. Dear papa, do not mind me at all. I am no more than a foolish, inexperienced girl. You are a wise and experienced man. Judge for yourself, and your judgment is sure to be just," said his

daughter, as she kissed him and withdrew from the room.

At this same hour, while Governor Cavendish and his daughter were talking over the newspaper paragraph, in which both were so much interested, Alden Lytton, pale with jealous rage and despair, was pacing the drawing-room floor. He had just read the paragraph, every word of which had struck like a dagger through his heart.

As he paced, he struck his clenched fist repeatedly upon his chest, and clutched his dark hair, gesticulated wildly, groaned and sighed, and muttered maledictions through his set teeth—behaving altogether more like a lunatic than a sedate law student.

But, then, he was only a boy, twenty years of age, passionately in love for the first time, and now nearly maddened with jealousy.

"It looked like it! I declare before Heaven it looked like it! Yesterday, at the reception, as she stood there at his side, beautiful and beaming, gracious and fascinating, in her courtly robes and with her courtly manner, receiving with him the homage of the world, I declare it looked as if she were already his idolized wife, sharing with him all his affections at home, all his dignities abroad.

"Oh! I shall go mad!" with another clutch at his raven ringlets—"I shall go mad! I know it must be so! How his face beamed on her! with what a claiming and possessing smile, as if he were proud and happy to know that she was his own, and wished all the world to know it, too!

"I shall kill myself, or him!"—with a violent blow upon his own chest.

"She has deceived me; has made a fool of me; and is laughing at me now! I will have an end of this! I will confront the false siren, and have the truth from her own lips, once for all! And if she has been false to me——"

He ground his teeth together as if he would have ground them to powder, and then went and rang the bell with a jerk that brought the hall footman hastily into the room.

"Go to Mrs. Grey and give my respects, and ask her if she will do me the favor to come down here and speak with me for a few minutes."

The footman bowed, and went on his errand.

"Now for it! This would really be fun if it were not just a little bit dangerous. But, however, the peril only gives the play a little more piquancy," said Mrs. Grey to herself, as she received this message.

Then she glanced at the mirror, smoothed her hair, adjusted her bewitching little widow's cap, and descended to the drawing room.

Alden was still pacing up and down the floor, a prey to the most stormy passions.

But as he saw Mary Grey gracefully floating toward him, he controlled himself by an almost superhuman effort, and went to meet her, took her gently by the hand, and led her up before the front window, through which the light of the morning sun shone full upon his pale, agonized brow, and upon her beautiful, false face.

They stood thus gazing on each other in silence for a few seconds, and then he raised the paper that he held in his hand, pointed to the paragraph, and with a voice deep, melodious, and singularly steady and gentle, considering his strong agitation, he said:

"One word! Is this statement true, or false?"

Looking him full and fondly in the face, she answered clearly and firmly:

"False!"

He believed her. Dropping the paper and clasping his hands, he raised his dark eyes toward heaven with a look of relief, thankfulness, and joy unspeakable.

Then she broke into a peal of soft silvery laughter, which ceased suddenly as she turned grave, and with comic solemnity gazed into his face, and shook her head, saying:

"Oh, you bad, bad boy! To doubt me, me! Why, what an awful jealous mind you have! What a tyrant you will be when we are once married——"

"When we are once married!" The words, the thought thrilled him with such sweet rapture that he let her go no further; he caught her to his true heart, and kissed her again and again with the pure, passionate fervor of a true boy's first love, breathing flutelike all the while the music of her name:

"May—May—May—May!"

"There, dearest—there, beloved, that will do. You take poor May's breath away. Besides, some one might come in. There, darling, let me go," she said, gently extricating herself. "Oh, but I did not mean to call you pet names either, sir! You don't deserve them one bit! You are an awful young man! A perfectly awful young man! A regular young Othello! To doubt me—me!" she said, relapsing into burlesque gravity and solemnly shaking her head.

"Forgive me, May! Sweetest, dearest May! For how could I help it? Recall the scenes of yesterday. To have seen you, standing by the governor's side, helping him to receive the world—he looking down upon you with such a smile of conscious and proud proprietorship; you looking up to him with such confiding and respectful affection. I tell you, sweet May, it nearly drove me crazy yesterday; although I hope I hid my sufferings so successfully that no one saw them. And this morning to see that paragraph —the announcement of your approaching marriage with the governor. Oh, May, can you wonder that I was driven nearly mad?" he pleaded, with his eyes on hers.

"No; I wonder at nothing you can do, for you are a horrid young man, a dreadful young Othello! I shall expect you to smother me with pillows in a jealous fit, some day, once we are married."

"Once we are married!" Again the thought was too much for his self-possession. He caught her and pressed her to his faithful heart, and kissed her in a sweet delirium.

"Promise me that you will never doubt me again, darling," she whispered, as she gently released herself.

"I never will, so help me all the angels!" he said, sinking on one knee at her feet and bowing his head over her hand, as if to give more solemnity to the vow.

And at that moment the door opened, and Governor Cavendish entered the room, and stood gazing upon them in amazement.

Alden Lytton, with his back toward the door, and his eyes fixed in fond admiration on the face of his beloved, did not perceive the presence of the intruder behind him.

Mary Grey, with her face toward the door, saw the governor without seeming to see him, with one quick and quickly withdrawn glance. But she did not lose her presence of mind for an instant. Smiling as sweetly as ever upon her young adorer, she took his hand, and said:

"Rise, foolish boy. You may utterly trust me to do all that I can to promote your happiness."

And she looked up smiling; but the governor was gone.

She saw that he had withdrawn without having been seen by Alden, and also without having perceived that he had been seen by herself. She felt much relieved by this fact. It would help her to smooth the affair over the more easily. She scarcely heard her young lover's earnest, impassioned reply:

"I do trust you, May, my beloved, I trust you utterly!"

The chime of silver laughter, and the pattering of light feet announced the approach of their youthful companions.

And soon the door opened, and Emma, Laura and Electra came in.

"The three Graces!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, as she held out her hand hypocritically to welcome them, as if they had come from a long journey, instead of from the upper rooms of the mansion. "The three Graces!"

"And Venus! The group is complete!" added Alden, gallantly.

"Really, Alden, you have grown to be quite a courtier," said Laura.

"Since I have been at this Court of Beauty, yes," retorted the young man.

And so they chattered away, with all the gayety of youthful spirits.

Mrs. Grey drew to one side and looked thoughtfully out of the front bay window, seeming to contemplate the snow-covered ground and the snow-crowned evergreens that adorned the front lawn; but in reality she was thinking of the false position into which her double-dealing had brought her.

"I'm in a fix now," she thought. She always thought in slang. "I'm in a deuce of a fix now, but I reckon I'm clever enough to get out of it. I must go now and smooth down the rumpled feathers of my old bird. But I must have some excuse for intruding on him in his study. I must not let him think that I have come to make an explanation or an apology for the scene he witnessed, or even that I suppose that is anything to explain or apologize for. Let me see. Let me see. Oh, I have it! I'll pretend I want to borrow the little close carriage to—let me see, now, oh, yes—to visit a poor family whom I wish to relieve! That's it."

And with these thoughts Mrs. Grey slipped from the room.

Meanwhile Charles Cavendish, with his arms folded and his fine head bowed upon his ample chest, walked slowly and thoughtfully away to his library, and sank down into his study-chair, dropped his head upon his open hands, and sighed heavily. A blow like death had fallen on him.

"I have been a fool in my age, and am properly punished. I am over sixty, and she under twenty! It was folly to love her, and madness to hope that she might love me in return. Oh, life! oh, age! that leaves us the anguish of loving, while it takes away the power of winning love!" He bowed his head upon his hand, and groaned.

There was a light tap at the door.

He looked up and listened, wheeled his chair around so

that his back was against the lighted window and his face on its shadow; for he would not have any visitor see the agitated state of his countenance. Then with an effort to steady his voice, he said:

"Come in."

CHAPTER XXX

ENCHANTRESS AND ENCHANTED

THE door opened and Mary Grey floated gracefully into the room, and in the most childlike and confiding manner drew a low chair and seated herself near him.

He was profoundly shaken by her unexpected presence in his present state of mind. He could not speak. It took all the force of his soul only to keep still.

She spoke in a sweet, truthful tone, looking up in his face with her bewildering smile. Luckily his face was in the shadow. She could not see its agonized workings.

"Will you do me a little favor?" she asked.

Still he could not speak. He could only drop down his rising anguish as he gazed on her beautiful, treacherous smile.

"Will you lend me your little closed brougham for an hour? I, who am nothing but a beggar myself, have to go to see a family of beggars whom I have promised to help to-day. And it is so cold and the snow is so deep, that I dread to expose myself. You know what a poor, shivering soul I am. I cannot stand the cold. So I would like to borrow your comfortable carriage for an hour. Please will you lend it to me?" she coaxed.

While she had been speaking, Mr. Cavendish had had time, in some degree, to recover himself and answer her, though in a broken and faltering voice.

"Yes, my child; yes, my tender flower! Heaven forbid that you should be exposed to the weather in your chari-

table missions. Command my brougham. Command my purse, too. Both are at your service for the benefit of your poor."

"Oh, thanks! thanks! I knew you would say that! like your noble self!" she exclaimed with childlike eagerness, as she caught and kissed his hand.

He shuddered and gently withdrew it, and said:

"But, May, dear, I would like to speak with you for a few minutes. Is there any immediate hurry about this charitable mission of yours?"

"Oh, no; not for an hour or two," she answered sweetly. "In fact, the appointment was for the afternoon," she added, smiling frankly, though every word she spoke was false.

There was a pause, during which she looked up in his face with an expression of innocent expectation on hers, while he passed his hand once or twice over his corrugated brow, in troubled thought, and then he laid the same hand in benediction upon her beautiful head, and murmured:

"May, my child, I was an unwilling witness for an instant, to a little scene in the drawing room this morning."

He paused and sighed profoundly, while she looked up at him in surprise and expectancy, for it was no part of her policy to let him know that she knew of his entrance into the drawing room at the critical moment of which he spoke.

"May," he continued, "I witnessed that little scene under circumstances that rendered it peculiarly painful to me. You saw the notice in this morning's *Standard* concerning you and myself?"

Mary Grey bowed slowly, and then dropped her head and blushed, or pretended to blush.

"Dear child, I wish, if it had been Heaven's will, it could have been true. Yes; and I so longed that it might be true, that I went down to the drawing room this morning to entreat you, May, to make it true!"

She bowed her head slowly again and again. And then she softly slipped her hand in his.

He pressed the little soft hand once, and then relinquished it, as he continued:

"For I had dared to love you! dared even to hope for a return of love! Yes, May! I, a veteran of sixty years, with gray hair, and a grown daughter, dared to love you and to hope that you in all your youth and beauty might possibly return my love! It was folly and presumption."

"No, no," she murmured in tender tones. "Not so! Not so! It was a great honor intended me!"

He shook his head, with a melancholy smile.

"Folly and presumption, my child!—folly and presumption; of which I became convinced as soon as my eyes were opened, by witnessing the scene I saw in the drawing room this morning," he added, with a heavy sigh.

She looked up at him with an expression of childlike curiosity and interest, as if she did not quite understand him, but wished very much to do so.

"I went down, as I told you, my child, with the intention of asking you then and there to be my wife, madly hoping to transplant you, you beautiful exotic flower! to the wintry garden of my life, to be the pride and delight of my declining years."

Again she slipped her hand in his, and poured a whole flood of love and veneration from the glory of the dark eyes that she lifted to his face.

Again he pressed the little soft hand and dropped it, his bosom heaving with suppressed emotion as he did so.

"But I saw there at your feet a lover, young, handsome, enthusiastic! One personally, morally and mentally worthy of your love."

Again deep sighs shook his frame. But this time she not only slipped her hand in his, but held his hand fast between her own, and gazed in his face with well-feigned amazement, as she said:

"Why, what do you mean? "

"No blame to you at least, sweet child. No, nor to him either. It was perfectly natural, right and proper that he should love you, and that you should return his love. You are both young, both beautiful, both poetic. It is inevitable that you should love."

"Oh, but indeed you were mistaken!" she exclaimed with fervor, clasping his hand within her own.

"Don't do that, dear child. It is—too trying!" he said in a choking voice, as he withdrew his fingers from her clinging clasp.

"But you were mistaken," she exclaimed, opening wide her dark eyes.

"I know I was mistaken, dear May," he said, misapprehending her meaning. "I know I was bitterly mistaken in supposing that your kind, gentle conduct toward me meant anything more than friendship and benevolence. It was madness in me to mistake it for a return of the deep love I bore you. Do not think I blame you in the least degree, fair child. I thank you, and shall ever thank you, for your goodness and loveliness, that have made the last few weeks of my life so happy; for it was no fault of yours, sweet one, that they led me into an egregious error."

"Oh, dear! you won't understand me!" she breathed, resignedly.

"Dear child, I do understand you! I understand and approve you. And, as I cannot be your husband, I must be your father," he said, laying his hand as if in blessing upon her bowed head.

She dropped her face into her open hands, and seemed to sob.

"Do not grieve for me. Listen to me. The young man who seeks your hand is quite worthy of your love. I would willingly accept him as my son-in-law, the husband of my only daughter, did he and Emma love each other. But they do not; so there is an end."

Mary Grey shook her head and sobbed.

"Don't grieve. Hear what further I have to say. It

may be years before Alden Lytton is in a position to marry. But I thank Heaven that I have it yet in my power to shorten the term of his probation, by putting him into some honorable and lucrative government office, which will enable him to marry and settle. And thus, dear child, if I cannot make you my wife, I can at least have the privilege of making you happy as the wife of your chosen lover."

"But I have no lover!" she exclaimed, passionately, as she raised her face, flushed and tearful, like a red rose sprinkled with morning dew.

"Eh?" he breathed, in a half-suppressed, hushed tone, as if he could scarcely believe but that he was dreaming, and was afraid of waking himself up.

"I have no lover," she repeated, with as much energy as before.

"May! May! for Heaven's sake say that yet once more!" he entreated, breathing hard.

"I have no lover but you! Oh, dear and honored friend, how could you so mistake 'May?' May has no other lover but you. She knows no other love but yours. She knows that you love her, and she has known it from the first. And she is proud, happy, yes, delighted in this love!"

And she laid both her hands in his.

"Come to my heart! You are my wife! my wife! the joy, the comfort, the blessing of my days!" he breathed in deep, hurried, impassioned tones, as he folded her to his bosom.

He believed her utterly. He had never doubted her truth, even when he supposed that she loved and was beloved by Alden Lytton. And now he did not doubt her love. He did not in this happy moment even think of asking an explanation of the scene he had witessed, which, if it did not mean mutual love between the actors in it, must have seemed quite inexplicable to him.

He pressed her to his heart for a moment in silence. And then, as he held her there, he raised his eyes toward

heaven, and earnestly thanked the Lord for bestowing upon him in his latter days this great and unexpected happiness.

"And now you have not asked me what the silly boy wanted when he was down on his knees before me," she archly said, as she gently released herself from his embrace.

"No; I have not. And he was not making a declaration of love to you then?"

"Oh, yes, he was, though," she said archly, shaking her head.

"I thought you said you had no lover but me—your old foolish one."

"Yes, I said that."

"But he was making a declaration of love to you!" said Mr. Cavendish, lifting his brows. "How may that be, lady mine?"

"He was making a declaration of love to me, I said, not for me."

"Ah! those little pronouns make the greatest deal of difference. With whom, I pray you, is the ingenuous youth in love? I am so happy now, dear May, that I will still help him to a wife, if he wants one."

"Can you not guess? Oh, you did guess long ago, only the absurd scene of this morning being the mystery to which you did not have the right key, threw you off the true scent. You even foretold this, and I feared it."

"Ah! I know now. He has lost his foolish boy's heart to my girl?" said Mr. Cavendish, smiling.

Mary Grey nodded.

"And doubtless he was begging your intercession with me to favor his suit?"

She nodded again.

"Silly fellow! Did he take me for the conventional 'cruel parent' of the comedies?"

"Yes."

The governor laughed outright, in the glee of his heart.

"I am so happy now, that even if I had ever had any

objection to that match, I should waive that objection. I could not have the heart to make two young lovers miserable, being myself so blessed in your love. But how does Emma like the young man?"

"I don't think she cares for him at all."

"Oh, she is too young to think of marriage yet. But when the proper time shall come, I think she might do worse than accept this young man. He positively lacks nothing but money, and she, I thank Heaven, will have a sufficiency of that."

"Will you hear a woman's counsel on this?"

"Certainly, my love, I will hear yours."

"Then I advise you, since you do not disapprove the suitor, not to notice the suit in any way. I think—but it is only a woman's thought—that interference in these matters is always injudicious."

"But, my dearest, since he has asked you to intercede for my favor of his suit, I wish at least to express my approval of it."

"Express it through me. Let me hint to them that his pretensions will not be frowned upon by you, and leave the rest to Providence."

"Quite right. And now, my darling, I have but a few words more to say to you on this subject. He asked you to intercede for my favor of his suit, and you have done so. And I have authorized you to convey to him my approval. This is all very well. But, May, darling, I trust that he has not asked you to try to influence Emma in his favor."

"Oh, no, he has not done that. Nor should I have consented to do such a thing."

"Certainly not. Such a course would have been very wrong. My girl must remain uninfluenced in her choice. No young woman should be persuaded into marriage by any one except the man who wishes to marry her; else she might be led to marry one whom she could not love."

"I feel that. I shall be very careful not even to praise the young fellow in Emma's presence."

"That is right. Leave her unbiased and perfectly free. And now, my darling, it is very, very sweet to have you here; but I fear that I am selfishly keeping you from that charitable mission upon which your heart is so set. Here, my child; you must let me contribute to aid your poor," said Mr. Cavendish, as he put a well-filled purse in her hands.

"Oh, thanks! thanks in the name of the widow and the orphan, the aged and the sick!" warmly replied Mary Grey, as she received the purse and put it in her pocket.

Then she performed a voluntary on his speaking organ. She stooped and kissed him.

CHAPTER XXXI

MRS. GREY'S CHARITIES

MARY GREY hurried to her room, took the purse from her pocket and greedily counted the money; for money was very scarce with her, and she loved it with more than a miser's love—she loved it with a pauper prodigal's love.

"One hundred and ninety-eight dollars! Oh! Ah! Here is a splendid stroke of business made by accident, for I never designed this, though it is a first-rate hint for future operations. Oh, my poor! Oh, my widows and orphans, my sick and aged, my maimed and blind of the city, whom I have never seen, and never mean to see, you will tax other people, but you will be a princely revenue to me! When I want a set of pearls or point lace, or sables, a silk dress, or a Cashmere shawl, or a French bonnet, I have only to get up a poor widow with eleven small children, or a motherless and fatherless family, with a blind grandmother, all down with the fever, or a sick mechanic out of work, about to be turned into the street with his family because he can't pay his rent, or some horror of

that sort, and I shall have all the funds I need for their relief and—my adornment," she said exultingly. She counted the money over again, to be sure that she had counted right. And then she joyfully exclaimed:

"Now I can buy that rich set of pearls at Senzeneye's. They were two hundred dollars, but he told me I could have them, as it was after Christmas, for one hundred and ninety-five. I will get them this very evening; for oh! I am so tired of wearing jet, jet, jet, all the while. And though it is real Whitby, it does look so much like dollar jewelry as to disgust me. And pearl will look lovely with my second mourning. I hope Senzeneye has not sold the beautiful set. I will go at once and see." And she rang the bell and ordered the brougham to be at the door in half an hour.

Then she dressed herself for her drive and went downstairs, entered the carriage, and drove off.

"Why, where is Mrs. Grey going—alone?" inquired Emma Cavendish of her companions, who were all with herself looking from the front bay window of the parlor.

No one could inform her.

"She is going on an errand of mercy. Therefore she goes alone. She 'let's not her left hand know what her right hand does,'" answered the governor, who had silently entered the room and overheard the question.

The girls looked around with faces that betrayed some little incredulity; but they said nothing.

Meantime you may depend upon it Mary Grey went on no errand of mercy. She ordered the coachman to drive her to Senzeneye's, the great jeweler on Main Street.

And there she purchased the beautiful set of pearls, consisting of eardrops, brooch and bracelet, for which she gave little less than two hundred dollars, though now they could scarcely be bought for twice the sum. Then, to deceive the coachman, lest he should possibly be questioned, she drove to a poor quarter of the city, and left the carriage and ostentatiously entered two or three hovels, at each of

which she gave a few pence to the poor children. At length she re-entered the carriage, saying with a sigh to the coachman, who let down the steps:

"Jerome, how distressing to see so much poverty! Oh, how I wish I was rich enough to relieve it all."

"Yes, miss, sartainly," Jerome answered, touching his hat as he closed the door on her and remounted his box, doubtless thinking to himself, "Miss Mary is an angel sure enough."

Jerome called the childlike widow "Miss." He scarcely recognized her as a grown-up woman, still less as a matron and a widow.

Soon as Mrs. Grey was reseated in the brougham, she opened her casket and began to gloat over her pearls.

"Oh, how exquisitely beautiful they are!" she said, actually pressing them to her lips and bosom. "How lovely I shall look in them! I shall wear them this very evening. But oh, what will the girls think? Even if they should be too polite to ask questions, how they will wonder and speculate as to how I could manage to get them. I must make up some story. Oh, I will tell them I sacrificed an old diamond ring that had been an heirloom in my family, but which was too large and old-fashioned for me, and so on," she mused, as the carriage rolled on toward the government house.

That night the young ladies, attended by Mrs. Grey, and escorted by Mr. Cavendish and Mr. Alden Lytton, went out to see the New Year's pantomime.

Mrs. Grey wore her beautiful pearls; but as her head was muffled in a swan's-down opera hood, it was not until they had all reached their private box, and had taken their seats and laid off their opera cloaks and hoods, that she had the pleasure of displaying her new treasures to the admiring eyes of her young friends. They glanced at her and her new ornaments with as much surprise as good breeding would permit them to betray.

And how she enjoyed their wonder! until at length the

curtain rose, and all were engaged in watching the grotesque humors of the pantomime.

After they had all got home that night, and had partaken of a light supper, and ascended to their bedroom floor, Mrs. Grey said laughingly:

"I saw you all looking at my beautiful pearls. Now don't you wish you knew where I got them? What will you give me to tell you?"

"I won't give anything, because I know already. Governor Cavendish made you a present of them! Pearls are the very things for a gentleman to give to his betrothed," said Electra, bluntly.

"Indeed, no! You are very much mistaken, my little love! Governor Cavendish knows no more where I got these pearls than you do. Guess again."

"Indeed I can't. You didn't steal them?"

Every one laughed at this saucy jest, which, though they did not know it, came so near the truth.

But Mrs. Grey replied good-humoredly:

"No, dear, I didn't steal them. What do you think, Miss Cavendish?" she inquired, turning with a smile to Emma.

"I did think they were presents to you from papa, but since you say they are not, I cannot tell what I think."

"And you, Laura, will you hazard a guess as to how I got these jewels?" she ventured to ask of Miss Lytton.

No, madam; for I am not in the detective business," roughly replied the lawyer's daughter.

"So you all give it up? Well, then, I will tell you. I sacrificed my grandmother's diamond ring! I dare say it was worth double the price of these pearls; but the diamonds needed to be recut and reset, and to have that done would have cost a great deal of money, and, after all, it would only have been a ring. And now you see I have in its place a full set of the most beautiful pearls," said Mrs. Grey, telling a falsehood so plausible that she herself half believed it.

"But I would not have parted with my grandmother's ring if I had been in your place, Mrs. Grey," said Emma Cavendish, gravely.

"I think it was a good exchange," put in Electra.

Laura shrugged her shoulders and said nothing, and so they bade each other good-night.

CHAPTER XXXII

NEW ARRANGEMENTS

THE Christmas holidays were drawing to a close.

The gay young party was soon to break up.

Alden Lytton was the first to depart. He was required to be at his college on the Monday after New Year.

So, after securing a private interview with Mary Grey, and taking a very tender leave of his false love in which the most impassioned and solemn vows of eternal fidelity to each other were mutually given and received, and promises of frequent and punctual epistolary correspondence exchanged, he bade adieu to the governor's hospitable family, kissed his sister, and departed.

The young ladies were not required to be at their boarding-school until the fifteenth of January, when the new term would open.

They had therefore about ten days longer of grace in which to enjoy the hospitality of the government house and the pleasures of the city.

As, however, the days passed, Governor Cavendish grew very uneasy at the approaching separation of himself and his "darling May."

He even urged her to resign her situation in the boarding-school, and make him happy by naming an early day for their union.

But as she felt quite sure of her conquest, she played

coy. She put him off. She told him that two years must really elapse from the time of her late husband's death before she could with propriety marry again. In the spring the second year would be completed. And after that she would name an early day for the marriage.

This "propriety" was her ostensible reason for the delay. But to have a longer time for a sentimental flirtation of correspondence with Alden Lytton was her real reason.

Her suitor was forced to submit, although he expostulated with her on the unreason and unkindness of her fiat; setting before her the fact that he himself was no longer a youth, with a long time before him, but a man in the decline of life, who at most had not very many years to live and enjoy the society of his young wife.

And for all this she expressed her sorrow and sympathy with tears and with kisses. But notwithstanding, she remained firm in her decision. And she wrote to Alden Lytton every day, and every day she received a letter from him.

Governor Cavendish dreaded the time of separation as it drew nearer.

The last day came at length. It was Friday. They were to leave Richmond on Saturday morning, so as to be at Mount Ascension for the opening of the school on Monday. Their trunks were all packed and ready. And on this Friday morning they were all going out in the open barouche to make some parting calls upon their friends, and also to do a little last shopping in the city.

Up to this time they had had very fine weather. And this morning also the sky was clear.

Emma Cavendish was standing before her dressing-glass, tying on her hat, when something like a white cloth passed between the window and the sunshine so suddenly that Emma turned to see what it could be.

It was snow.

Emma could scarcely believe her eyes.

A moment before the sky had been bright with sun-

shine. Now it was snowing fast. So suddenly did the greatest snowstorm of this century arise.

"It will soon be over," said she, as she laid her hat off and went downstairs into the drawing room, where her companions, all ready for their drive, were waiting for her.

"Emma, dear, the barouche has been at the door these ten minutes," said Mrs. Grey.

"It is snowing. We shall have to wait a few minutes until it is over," said Miss Cavendish.

"Snowing!" exclaimed all the girls in chorus.

"Come to the window and see," said Emma, as she went and drew aside the rich crimson velvet curtains of the bay window, and bade her companions look.

It was snowing faster than ever, now.

"I never knew a snowstorm to rise so suddenly in a clear sky before. But it cannot last long. We shall have to wait until it is over, however."

"What a bore!" said Electra.

"I wonder how long we shall have to wait?" inquired Laura.

"Oh, not long; twenty minutes, perhaps. It is only a passing gust of snow," replied their young hostess.

And so thought many others besides Emma Cavendish.

But they were all mistaken. Faster and faster came down the snow. The girls waited and waited, while the sky thickened and thickened with fast falling snow.

At length they reluctantly gave up their drive. The carriage was ordered back to the stable. And they all went upstairs and laid off their hats, mantles and furs, and concluded to spend this last day quietly at home.

"If you will each give me lists of what you intended to buy to-day I will leave them with papa, and he will purchase the articles and send them to us. So our shopping will be provided for. And if you will give me your cards I am sure papa will send them around to our friends. So our leave-taking will be accomplished. And, upon the

whole, all will be right. And, as for myself, I am not sorry that we shall spend this last day with dear papa, who seems to be very sorry at the thought of losing us," said Miss Cavendish.

And all her companions, with more or less sincerity, agreed with her.

And but for the thought of to-morrow's parting, this would have been one of the happiest days they had spent at the government house.

But it snowed fast all day. And when night closed in it was still snowing.

As this was to be the last night of their stay, they sat up very late, loath to separate.

At one o'clock, before bidding each other a final good-night, Mr. Cavendish opened the window shutter to look out.

It was still snowing fast as ever.

"This will be a very deep snow, I think," he said, as he closed the shutter.

"And who would have thought so this morning, to see how suddenly it came up!" Emma remarked.

"We shall have to rise very early in the morning to catch the train, so we'd better retire," observed practical Laura.

"Don't be alarmed, dear. Everything is ready. Our trunks are strapped, and brought down into the hall. The breakfast-table is already set. The cook has orders to put breakfast on the table at seven o'clock. And the coachman has been directed to bring around the closed carriage at half-past. So we may sleep till a quarter to seven—when Sarah has orders to call us—and we can afterward dress in a hurry," said her young hostess.

And so discussing the business of the morning they retired for the night.

And they slept until they were roused up by the loud knocking of Miss Cavendish's own maid, Sarah.

It was still quite dark.

"What sort of a morning is it, Sarah?" inquired Emma Cavendish.

"I don't know, miss. None o' the windows ain't opened yet, though Jeemes is just unbarrin' o' the breakfas' room uns," answered the girl, as she lighted the gas in her young mistress' room.

The young ladies arose in a hurry, and dressed in a hurry, and went downstairs to the breakfast room, where the gas was lighted, and where the early morning meal was already laid upon the table awaiting them.

Governor Cavendish came forward to meet them.

"Oh, dear papa, I am so sorry you turned out of your bed so early to see us off," said Emma regretfully.

"My darling, what else could I do?" he tenderly inquired.

But if the truth must be told, it was not only affection for his daughter, but passionate love for his "darling May," that brought him there to see the youthful party off.

They all sat down together to breakfast, consulting their watches from time to time, to see how long they might safely linger over it.

At length Laura Lytton consulted her little time-keeper, and exclaimed:

"Dear me! It is twenty minutes to eight o'clock!"

"And the carriage was ordered at half-past seven, and it is not yet announced. Papa, dear, the bell is at your elbow," said Emma.

Mr. Cavendish rang the bell, which quickly brought in the hall footman.

"James, see if the carriage is at the door," said his master.

The man bowed, went out, and soon returned with the answer:

"No, sir."

"Go see why it is not, then, and hurry the coachman. The young ladies may miss the train."

The man went out a second time, and soon returned, followed by the coachman.

"How is this, Jerome? Were you not ordered to have the carriage at the door at half-past seven?" sternly demanded his master.

"Yes, sir. And please, sir, I were up at six o'clock so to do. But please, sir, the stable and the carriage house is both snowed up to that extent as I hev a been a tryin' to dig 'em out and open the doors for an hour or more," answered the man.

"Good heavens! and it is now nearly eight o'clock! The young ladies will miss the train!" exclaimed Mr. Cavendish.

"If you'll scuse me for saying of it, sir, I don't think no young ladies can't go on no train, not this morning," answered the old servant, negativing the journey in the most emphatic manner.

"Why not? What's the matter? Is the snow so deep? Is it still snowing?"

"It's a most awful day, sir. Far's we can see—'cause it's a wery dark morning—the snow is wery deep indeed, and it keeps on snowing."

Governor Cavendish arose, and with great difficulty forced open the window shutters.

It was an awful day.

By the time, it should have been daylight. But it was not. Thick clouds and fast falling snow obscured the morning.

He closed the window and turned to his young people, who, all well wrapped up for their journey, stood waiting in suspense.

"It is all over for to-day, my dears. I doubt if the train itself can go to-day; and I know that you cannot," he said.

And the young ladies saw that for his part he was very glad.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE BRIDE ELECT

"YES, you will have to stay where you are for the present, my dears. I doubt even if the train can go in such weather as this," said the governor.

Perhaps no one of the youthful party was much disappointed. Most likely all were very well pleased to be obliged to remain in the city for a few days longer.

One person was delighted, and that one was Governor Cavendish; for he had a respite from the dreaded pain of parting with his beautiful love. His voice was quite brisk and cheery as he turned to the footman and inquired:

"Jerome, is there a fire in the drawing room?"

"Yes, sir," answered the man. "But the windows ain't open yet, and the gas is burning, sir."

"Go, then, and open the windows. Let us see the daylight, such as it is. Come, young ladies. We will go to the drawing room," said Mr. Cavendish, leading the way.

The young people followed him to the front parlor, and began to take off their hats and furs, while the servant opened the shutters.

"Now, Jerome, take all these articles upstairs, and give them to my maid to put away," said Miss Cavendish, pointing to the hats, shawls, furs and so forth, that had just been laid off and piled upon a pier-table by herself and her friends.

The man bowed, gathered them up, and walked off with his arms full.

Mr. Cavendish and his young people crowded into the recess of the bay window to look out upon the weather.

What weather!

It was broad daylight now, but nothing could be seen but quickly falling snow. It was no use to look out—not a vestige of anything else was visible.

They turned away from the window and looked into each other's faces.

"No matter," said the governor, in a cheery voice. "We must reconcile ourselves to the inevitable. By present appearances the roads will not be in a passable condition for many days to come; so you will have to remain here with me for a week longer at least. But take courage, for, though the country roads may be impracticable for young travelers, yet the city streets will soon be in a fine condition for sleighing."

"Oh, I'm content! I wouldn't mind being snowed up in such a nice house as this all winter!" said Electra frankly.

"Thank you, my dear," replied the master of the house, patting her head approvingly.

"Our very early breakfast will make a long morning for us. And the gloomy weather will make it still longer. But we must try to devise some way of passing the time usefully and agreeably," said Emma Cavendish to her young guests.

"I think we might amuse ourselves, Penelope like, by undoing to-day what we did yesterday," said practical Laura Lytton.

"How, my love?" inquired Mrs. Grey.

"By unpacking the trunks we packed up, to be sure. We can't live in trunks two or three days, or a week, can we?"

"Certainly not. Your idea is a good one, my dear. I will order the trunks taken up to our rooms immediately," said Miss Cavendish, reaching her hand to the bell.

Jerome appeared, and received the necessary directions.

And in another hour the young people were busy unpacking their trunks, and restoring their dresses and other girlish finery to wardrobes and bureau drawers.

Then they took their workbaskets, with crochet or embroidery, and went down into the parlor, where Governor Cavendish was walking up and down the floor in a very

restless condition for the want of his morning paper, which the terrible state of the weather had prevented the carrier from bringing.

" 'Chaos is come again!' " he said, in comical distress, referring to his loss.

"Snow-bound in a city house supplied with every means and appliance of comfort and entertainment, and grumbling and growling as if we were ice-bound in Behring Straits! Oh, papa, how can you?" said Emma, gayly.

"But the *Morning Star,* my dear!"

"Oh, it will rise in due time, never fear."

"The sturdy little carrier will not neglect his duty on account of weather, you may depend," added Laura Lytton.

But they were all mistaken.

The snow continued to fall as fast as ever all that day and all the next night. And toward the morning of the third day, which was the Sabbath, the snow was reported three feet deep on a level.

But about ten o'clock, at the same hour at which the snow commenced on Friday, it ceased on Sunday. And the wind changed, and blew a gale from the northwest, and drifted the snow "mountains high," as the people said.

Everybody was snow-bound in their houses for several days. Then the wind changed to the south, and there came a mighty thaw, and streets ran like rivers until the snow was gone, and then they looked like great mud gutters.

They had had three days of steadily falling snow, that had covered the ground three feet deep; then a three days' gale of wind, that had drifted the snow into mountains and valleys where mountains and valleys had never been seen before; and finally three days of warm sunshine that turned the streets into canals. In all it was about ten days that some travel was interrupted and much business impeded.

During this time the family at the government house

amused themselves as well as they could. During the three days of gale and drifting snow they were obliged to stay in the house, the young people occupying themselves with a little crochet, embroidery, music, drawing, reading or writing; and the governor with his books and papers, and more than all, with his "beautiful love," as he called Mary Grey. The time did not hang heavily on his hands. Mrs. Grey made it so light indeed, that Mr. Cavendish wished it might last forever.

During the thaw they went out daily, in the carriage or on foot. And they received several visits.

About the tenth day since the storm, when the ground had dried a little, there was some talk of starting again upon their interrupted journey.

Mrs. Grey wrote to Mrs. St. John, the principal of Mount Ascension, to explain to her, what no doubt she understood well enough without such an explanation, the reason why she and the young people under her charge failed to return to the school at the commencement of the term, and promising to start on their journey as soon as the state of the roads would make traveling safe.

"And then, at last, I must lose you, darling!" sighed her lover, when he heard from her that this letter had been sent.

She pressed his hand in eloquent silence. And that was all the answer she made.

"I thank Heaven for that snowstorm that bound you here, and gave me your dear company for a fortnight longer than I could have hoped for such happiness. And, oh, how I wish that something as unexpected would occur to prevent you from ever leaving me!" he said.

She smiled on him and shook her head in silence. She was a great believer in "golden silence," especially when she could not think of anything very pretty to say.

"Ah, yes, if something would only happen to keep you here with me!" he repeated, with a sigh. "If I were very ill, would you stay with me, then, May?"

"Yes, indeed, I would," she answered, earnestly.

"Then, I wish I were very ill. Ah, yes, child, what a fool I am in my love for you! For I think that illness, or any affliction, would be better than a separation from you."

CHAPTER XXXIV

DISCHARGED

It seemed as though Governor Cavendish's expressed wish that something to prevent Mrs. Grey from leaving his house was prophetic. Something did happen.

Three days from that on which Mary Grey had written to Mrs. St. John, a batch of letters arrived from Mount Ascension. There was one from Mrs. St. John to each of her absent pupils, expressing regret that they had been prevented by the storm from returning to school at the appointed time, and a hope that she should soon see their faces. There was not one word in either of these letters addressed to the young ladies that referred in the least degree to Mrs. Grey—a circumstance at which they wondered, until they learned that Mrs. Grey herself had received a letter.

Yes, Mrs. Grey had received a letter, whose very first words turned her cheeks to an ashen pallor, as she hastily arose from her seat in the parlor and retreated to her own room to read it unobserved by any.

The young ladies, absorbed in the perusal of their own letters, did not observe her agitated retreat.

When she found herself alone in the privacy of her chamber, she carefully locked the door and then sat down to read the fatal letter through. It ran thus:

"Mount Ascension, Va., January 25th, 18—.

"Mrs. Mary Grey—Madam: I address you by the name you have lately assumed, although I know now it is

not your real name, and also that you are not a widow and have never been a wife.

"The facts of your real history have come to my knowledge in a manner that leaves no possibility of doubt in respect to them upon my mind.

"I forbear to express the pain and shame and just indignation I have felt in having discovered the gross deception put upon me, and the affront offered to the young ladies of my establishment, by your presence among them.

"I forbear to expose your past life to the knowledge of others. Redeem that life, if you can. But you must know that I can never again receive you under the honorable roof that shelters the good young maidenhood of my school. I will not, however, dismiss you without full compensation for the whole year for which you were engaged. You will find enclosed a check for the amount of your salary for the period named. Take it with my sincere forgiveness and good wishes, and try to redeem your life.

"ELIZABETH ST. JOHN."

"Ha, ha! ha, ha! ha, ha!" bitterly laughed Mary Grey, in hysterical excitement, as she threw the letter down and ground it under her feet. "The mocking old hag! 'Redeem my life!' Am I not trying to redeem my life, when she sends this cruel, cutting, hypocritical, insulting letter to strike me down by despair to destruction? Suppose this letter had by any chance fallen into any other hands but mine? Suppose it had fallen into his hands? Nothing but death would have been left me—death by my own hands—for I would not have lived humbled in his eyes! Stop! I must destroy this venomous letter before it can hurt me any more!" she said, catching up the obnoxious paper, tearing it to pieces, and putting it into the fire, where she watched it until every atom was burnt to ashes.

Then she began to walk restlessly up and down the floor, fretting like an irritated tigress in her cage.

"What shall I do now? What shall I do? I cannot

go back there! Shall I drop a line to my young lover, who would leave his college and marry me to-morrow, if I would let him? Or shall I give a hint to my old lover, who would wed me to-day if he could? Neither of them need ever know how dishonorably I have been discharged! For that old wretch has at least promised that she will not expose me to others.

"So, shall I write and recall my young lover?

"No, no, no; I love him better than all on earth! I love him only of all on earth, but I cannot face poverty even with him; I mean to marry him some day, but not while he is poor and I am poor! I must be a rich young widow, and he a rising young lawyer, before we can afford to marry!

"Shall I drop a hint to my aged adorer?

"Ah, yes; I fear I must do that! But how account to him for my change of purpose? I can never confess to him that I have been shamefully dismissed from the school, like a dishonest servant from her place!

"Let me see! Let me see! There must be some way out of this difficulty, and I must find it," she said, walking slowly up and down the room.

So she walked and thought, and walked and thought, until she had worked out her plan.

Then she sat down and opened her little writing-desk, selected some plain note paper, and fitted it crosswise to the empty stamped and postmarked envelope of Mrs. St. John's letter.

Then, with her wonderful talent for fac-simile copying, she wrote another letter, purporting to be from Mrs. St. John to herself, with a perfect imitation of that lady's handwriting. The forged letter ran as follows:

"Mount Ascension, Va., January 25th, 18—.

"My Dearest Mrs. Grey: I received yours of the 21st, explaining the reason why you and the young ladies under

your charge did not return in time for the opening of the new school term.

"Of course I knew that the delay was caused by no fault of yours. Indeed, I have never during the time of our mutual and very agreeable engagement had the slightest cause to find fault with you. I wish I could say as much for all my young assistant teachers. And the perfect satisfaction you have given me makes it all the more difficult for me to write what I am now compelled to communicate. In a word, my dear young friend, I am reluctantly obliged to part with you. My school is not so flourishing as it promised to be. Many of my pupils have failed to return this term. My expenses are very heavy. It is absolutely necessary that I should retrench them in order to avoid positive bankruptcy. And thus, you see, my dear and highly esteemed young friend, that being no longer able to pay your salary, I am forced to relieve you of your duties. Call on me promptly, if I can aid you in procuring a new engagement; and believe me ever, my dearest Mrs. Grey, your sincere friend, ELIZABETH ST. JOHN."

"That will do," said Mary Grey, with a rather grim smile on her lovely lips, as she critically examined her work and folded it, and slipped it into Mrs. St. John's empty envelope.

"That will do," she repeated—"that real envelope, directed in her own handwriting, and postmarked and stamped quite regularly, will lend a reality to the inclosed letter that will place it beyond question."

And, so saying, she arose and bathed her face and smoothed her hair, and made herself look as pretty as possible to go down and talk with her old lover.

She could not find him in the drawing room. No one but the young ladies were there, chattering over their letters. She left them, and went up to the door of the governor's study and rapped softly.

He opened the door, and welcomed her with smiling face and loving words and outstretched hands.

"I knew it was you, my angel visitant," he said, drawing her into the room, and seating her in an easy-chair. "What is your sweet will with me?"

"Oh, dear, I am in trouble," she answered, putting up her lips like a grieved child.

"In trouble, darling? What trouble can you be in that I cannot free you from? Tell me!" he said, seating himself beside her and taking her hand, and gazing on her with every expression of sympathy and enouragecment.

"Oh, dear, I—— It is very mortifying to confess it, but I am a servant out of place," replied the beauty, with a pretty pout of childish distress.

"A servant out of place, my angel! Whatever do you mean?" inquired the perplexed governor.

"Oh, dear! I mean what I say. It is too true! I am a discharged servant. For no fault of my own, however. Can bring good recommendations from my last place," said Mrs. Grey, with a pretty, childish blending of fretfulness and fun in her manner.

"My dearest Mary! Will you tell me what you are talking about? For really I do not understand your trouble," said the bewildered governor.

"Haven't I explained it by saying that I am a female domestic out of a situation? But read this letter. This will explain my explanation," said Mrs. Grey, putting the forged letter into the hands of her lover.

Mr. Cavendish examined the genuine envelope first, as she knew he naturally would.

"Ah! from Mount Ascension!" he said. "In answer, I suppose, to your letter of Monday?"

"Yes," she answered, with a nod.

He unfolded the letter and read it through, without a word. Then he quietly refolded it, replaced it in the envelope, laid it on the table, and opened his arms, saying:

"Come to me! Come to me, my darling! Here is your

resting place! Here is your home! Do not hesitate longer, dearest May, to give me at once the legal right to protect you. Come to my heart, as Noah's weary dove to her ark."

And he drew her to his bosom.

She dropped her head upon his shoulder and burst into tears—tears of self-pity only, and not of affection or of gratitude.

When she had sobbed herself into comparative quietness, she resumed her seat and said:

"I must find some temporary home."

"Your home is here. You shall not leave it with my consent," he answered, earnestly.

"But, dear friend, you know it would not be proper for me to remain here, after the young ladies shall have all left me and returned to school."

"But they shall not all leave you, my poor darling. My daughter shall remain with you. I will write to Mrs. St. John and forward the fees for her board and tuition for the coming term, so that there be no pecuniary disappointment; but I shall not forward the young lady," said Mr. Cavendish.

"Oh, no! pray, pray do not make such a sacrifice on my account," pleaded Mrs. Grey, with well assumed humility.

"It will be no sacrifice at all. I want my daughter. And—I no longer like or approve Mrs. St. John," said Mr. Cavendish, emphatically.

"Then, oh! at least, please do not mention my name to her at all when you write. She has been a dear friend to me, and I love her. And I would not have her think that I had been, either directly or indirectly, instrumental in depriving her of her favorite pupil—for, indeed, sir, you know that I did not wish to do so," said Mrs. Grey, artfully.

"I know it, my darling. I know that you are all goodness and truth. I shall not compromise you with your old friend in any manner. There, dearest, leave it all in my

hands. I will write by this mail," he said, as he drew her to his bosom and kissed her.

And then she gently released herself and left the room.

CHAPTER XXXV

A SURPRISE FOR EMMA

To be frank with you, my reader, I feel rather vexed with Governor Cavendish at this time for suffering his wisdom to be turned into folly by the blandishments of an unprincipled young beauty. But, then, love, like all other juvenile maladies, goes extremely hard with those of riper years.

Perhaps the great statesman was dimly conscious of his littleness in this one respect, from the fact of his extreme reluctance to break his change of plans to his daughter, Emma—that devoted child who was ever ready to make any sacrifice of her own happiness for her father's comfort.

He wrote his letter to Mrs. St. John, inclosing the amount of school fees for the coming term, and politely informing her that he desired to withdraw his daughter from the establishment, not from any dissatisfaction, but simply from the need he felt of her society at home. Thus he gave the principal of Mount Ascension a very great surprise, but not the least offense.

Having sealed this letter, he rang and summoned his own footman.

"Take this letter and put it in the post-bag and then ask Miss Cavendish to come to me," he said.

A few minutes after the delivery of this message Emma Cavendish came into the room, looking very lovely in her pure white merino morning dress, with the swan's-down trimmings.

"Sit down here beside me, dear," said her father, offering the very chair lately occupied by Mary Grey.

"You look pale and harassed, dear papa. Are you not well?" inquired his daughter, laying her soft hand upon his corrugated brow.

Here was a good opening.

"No, my child, I am not well. The cares of state and —other matters trouble me. And I am no longer young, my dear," he answered, with a sigh.

"My dear papa!" she said, with infinite tenderness and sympathy.

"Emma!"

"Yes, papa."

"How were you getting on with your studies at Mount Ascension, my love?"

"Very well, papa."

"Is it really a good institution of learning?"

"An excellent one, I think, papa; but of course I do not know how it compares with others of its kind, never having been at any other."

"Were you happy there?"

"As happy as I could be anywhere, away from home and you, papa. Yes, I may say I was happy there."

"And are you very anxious to return?"

She looked up into his face in surprise and perplexity, but she divined his wishes in a moment.

"No, indeed, papa. I am not at all anxious to go back, especially if you wish me to stay with you," she answered promptly and heartily.

"Thanks, dearest child. I do wish you to stay with me. I am no longer young, and no longer well. And I need you, my daughter," he said, pathetically.

"And I need you, dear papa. I never did wish to be banished from you; but Aunt Wesley insisted on my going to boarding-school, and you and I yielded to her judgment. But there is really no necessity for my going back, dear

papa. I can study quite as well at home," she said, cordially.

"And you can have as many professors as you like; the best in the city, if you please. And, moreover, my daughter, you can have your liberty, which I take it is the greatest boon of all, to young as well as to old."

"Yes, dear papa, it really is," smiled Emma.

"And you can have your favorite schoolmates come and spend their holidays with you just the same."

"Dearest papa!" she said, smiling, and putting her arm around his neck and kissing him. "Don't I know that you will do everything in the world that you can to make your spoiled child happy? Haven't you always done so? Haven't you been father and mother, sister and brother, friend and companion and confidant, and all in all to me, ever since I was born? So you needn't promise me anything, for I am sure of it beforehand."

Governor Cavendish pressed his daughter to his heart, and sighed heavily; feeling, perhaps, that he was about to turn traitor to all this lifelong love and trust by giving her a young stepmother.

"Emma," he said again, "I have something else to tell you, my child."

"Yes, papa."

"Something that I fear may give you pain."

"Papa!" she said, in a quick, low tone.

"My child, our conversation on the second of this month may perhaps have prepared you for this communication," he said, hesitatingly.

"Papa, I think I understand you. There is some one else besides your daughter who is necessary to complete your happiness," she answered, with an involuntary sigh, as she withdrew herself from his embrace and resumed her seat.

"Yes, my daughter, there is some one else necessary to complete my happiness—just as, in the course of nature, my beloved Emma, there will be some one else besides your

father necessary to complete the circle of your own life's joy. Don't you understand? Don't you understand, my daughter?"

"Oh, my dear papa, I understand too well. A lady will come between you and me, papa—a lady who will be nearer and dearer to you than I have ever been. I understand that part of your speech, but the other part I do not understand; for no man shall ever come between me and you, papa! No love but yours is needful to my happiness," she said, in a voice tremulous with emotion.

"My dearest child, you speak from ignorance and inexperience. In a year or two, you will tell another tale."

"Oh, no, no, papa! never! I will never leave you for any other love. Oh, dear papa, your happiness is dearer to me than anything else in the whole world! But I do not think your happiness will be secured by this contemplated marriage. I do not, indeed. If I did, I should not so much mind taking the second place in your heart and home; but something here," she said, placing her hand upon her heart, "assures me that your happiness and mine will be utterly wrecked in this union."

"Emma, why do you say this, my child?" he inquired, in a tone full of pain.

"Oh, dear papa, because I know it and feel it in my heart of hearts. The woman is not worthy of you, papa."

"Emma, I cannot permit you to speak of that lady in this manner. No, much as I love you, my daughter, I cannot permit you to speak ill of my promised wife," he said, in a tone of severity such as he had never before used toward his idolized daughter.

She started with surprise and pain. And then suddenly she threw her arms around his neck, as if she would snatch him away from some imminent peril, and, bursting into the tears she could no longer suppress, she cried:

"Oh, dearest papa, do not say that! do not say that she is your promised wife! Oh, papa, listen, dear! You are all the world to me. Your comfort is my first and last,

my whole thought. Oh, papa, if you will only give up this marriage—which is going to work woe, I feel sure—if you will only give up this marriage, I, on my part, will promise never to marry, or think of marrying; never to leave you, or love any other but you; and vow to live an old maid for your sake, and devote all my life to cherish and comfort yours; yes, and to be very happy in doing such sweet duty. Papa, will you grant me my prayer? Papa, for your own dear sake, as well as for mine, will you grant me my prayer?"

"Oh, my dear child, what distress you cause me! you, who profess to love me, and do love me so much! What distress, and even what anguish, you cause me!" groaned the father, covering his face with his hands.

"Papa! dearest papa! I would save you from trouble and distress. Oh, papa! for the sake of your own dignity, for the sake of your daughter's future, give up this fatal thought of marriage!" pleaded Emma.

And it is but just to her to say that when she pleaded with her father in the name of his "daughter's future," she did so only because she knew it would be the strongest plea she could possibly use, and not because she thought about her own interests at all; for truly she thought only of her beloved father's honor and welfare.

He remained with his hands over his face, while deep sighs heaved from his bosom. At length, he answered, in a broken voice:

"My dearest child, I would to Heaven I might grant your prayer. But I cannot. I have gone too far to retract with honor even if I wished to retract, which I do not. I am bound to this lady in heart, as well as in word. I am engaged to her—and I could not live without her. So you see I could not honorably break the marriage off, if I would, and—I would not, if I could. This is final, Emma."

"And fatal! Oh, my dear father," sighed the daughter.

"I hope, my dear child, that your prejudice—I will say your natural, your very natural prejudice—against the idea of a stepmother, will not prevent you from treating the lady with due respect," said Mr. Cavendish, earnestly.

"My dearest papa, be sure that I will treat Mrs. Grey always with due respect," replied Miss Cavendish, in a tone and with an accent that did not in the least degree serve to tranquilize her father's troubled mind.

Then she kissed him, and arose and inquired:

"Is there anything else you want me for, papa?"

"No, my dear," sadly responded her father.

"Then I will go. Good-by, dear papa," she said, kissing him tenderly.

"Why, my dear, you say 'Good-by' as if you were going very far away from me," he said, uneasily, holding her hand and detaining her by his side.

"I am going only to my room; yet I feel as if you had sent me, and I was going very far away from you, indeed."

"Oh, Emma, Emma!"

"Forgive me, papa; perhaps in time I shall get over this feeling. Good-by!"

And she kissed him again, and then withdrew herself from his embrace and left the room. She felt the need of going off by herself to give way to the overwhelming grief that filled her bosom.

CHAPTER XXXVI

EMMA'S FIRST SORROW

SHE went and locked herself in her chamber, fell down upon her bed and wept bitterly.

She did not rejoin her young companions until the dinner hour, when her pale face and depressed manner attracted their attention. After dinner they came to her

with affectionate inquiries, to all of which Miss Cavendish replied evasively:

"I am not quite well. I have had a chill."

And this was true, in one sense of the word. She had had a chill, poor girl, and it was none the easier to bear for being a spiritual chill.

But they, understanding only a material ague, came around her with expressions of regret and anxiety.

And Mrs. Grey put her hand on Emma's shoulder, cooing forth the words:

"My poor darling! She must go to bed, and have some nice spiced——"

But Miss Cavendish shrank from her with a look that clearly repelled present, and forbade all future familiarities of that sort.

"Something is up in that quarter. Emma snubbed the widow, and won't let her 'gush,'" whispered Electra to Laura Lytton.

"I don't wonder," remarked the lawyer's daughter.

The next day was Saturday. The young ladies were to return to school on the following Monday. Laura and Electra, who shared the same bedroom, were busy packing their trunks, when Emma Cavendish joined them.

"I think we shall have fine weather for our journey this time," said Laura, lifting her head out of her trunk.

"I hope you will have," answered Emma.

"Hope 'you' will have? What do you mean, Emma? You speak just as if only we were going," said Electra.

"Only you and Laura are going, I am sorry to say, dear," answered Miss Cavendish.

Electra and Laura stopped packing to gaze at her in silent astonishment.

"It is true, my dears. My father says that he needs me at home. So he has written to Mrs. St. John, and permanently withdrawn me from the school."

"Oh, I am so sorry! I could sit down and cry!" said Laura.

"But why does not Mrs. Grey return?" inquired Electra.

"Mrs. Grey will be Mrs. Cavendish within a month from this," said Emma, bitterly.

The two other young girls looked at the speaker, and then at each other. They had certainly expected this event, but not quite so soon. Then Laura Lytton went and threw her arms around Emma Cavendish and burst into tears, exclaiming:

"Oh, my darling! my darling! I am so sorry for you. What a calamity!"

"There, don't weaken me, Laura, dear! This cannot be helped," said Emma, extricating herself from her friend's embrace.

"And so you are to stay her to keep the betrothed bride in countenance until she is married—for that is the real reason why you are kept from school, Emma," said Electra.

"Yes, I suppose that is the true reason," answered Miss Cavendish.

"I like that. That's the funniest part of the whole funny affair, that you should play the part of chaperon to your own stepmother that is to be," laughed Electra.

"I came in to tell you this news, dear friends. And now I will leave you to your packing," said Miss Cavendish, as she withdrew from the room.

"This will almost kill Emma," said Laura Lytton, sadly.

"I tell you what I would do, if I were you; I would counsel Emma to marry the very first good-looking young man who makes love to her," said Electra.

"Indeed, I shall do no such thing! And he would be a very bold young man, I think, who would venture to make love, as you call it, to Emma Cavendish," said Laura.

"Well, then, if I were Emma, and didn't want to live with my stepmother, and didn't want to marry, I'd—I'd go for a missionary to the heathen, or go on the stage, or something."

"Go for a missionary, or go on the stage! How mixed your ideas are, dear Electra!" laughed Laura.

And that ended their talk for the time being.

While they were locking their trunks Mrs. Grey came sauntering in.

She sank gracefully down into a resting-chair and cooed:

"Perhaps, my dears, you may not have heard that I do not attend you back to school?"

"Yes, madam, we have heard it," answered Laura Lytton quite curtly.

"And we bear it with great fortitude," added Electra, drawing down the corners of her mouth.

Mrs. Grey eyed them with a dark look and withdrew from the room, probably resolved that when she should be the mistress of the Cavendish house these impertinent girls should come there no more to spend their Christmas or midsummer holidays.

When they had strapped down the lids of their trunks the two girls separated for a while. Electra went down into the drawing room to practice a song that she wished to sing to Mr. Cavendish that evening.

And Laura went to the library to look for writing material to write to her brother at the University of Virginia, to tell him the news of the week, and especially that the rumored matrimonial engagement between Governor Cavendish and Mrs. Grey was now reduced to a certainty; that the engagement had been formally announced to the family and friends of the governor, and the marriage was to be solemnized in about a month from date—on Shrove Tuesday, in fact—because Mrs. Grey, who was a strict Ritualist, would not be married in Lent, and Governor Cavendish, who was a very ardent and impatient lover, would not wait until Easter.

She added that Mrs. Grey would not return again to her school duties, but would remain a guest at the government house, with Emma Cavendish to keep her in countenance until the wedding day.

Laura ended her letter by requesting her brother to address his next letter to her at Mount Ascension, to which she and her schoolmate would return on the following Monday.

Laura Lytton sent off her letter by that night's mail, little dreaming what a terrible storm that news would raise, and what an awful catastrophe it would precipitate upon all their heads.

For Laura Lytton had not the slightest suspicion of her brother's fatal passion for that baleful beauty, Mary Grey.

Alden Lytton, with the mingled shyness of youth and the superstitious worship of love, had concealed his passion from his sister's knowledge, deeming it too precious and sacred a mystery to be intrusted even to her confidence.

Mrs. Grey, for other and more practical reasons, had carefully guarded her secret.

Thus Laura, when she wrote that firebrand of a letter, knew nothing of the magazine of powder into which she threw it.

On Monday morning, according to program, the young ladies, Laura Lytton and Electra, left the city for Mount Ascension.

Emma Cavendish saw them depart with real sorrow, and Mrs. Grey with many hypocritical tears.

Governor Cavendish attended them to the railway station, where they were met by a country clergyman who happened to be traveling in the same direction, and who promised to see the young ladies safe to the end of their journey.

The next two days passed very quitely at the government house.

Miss Cavendish kept her room very closely, appearing in the drawing room only at meal times.

But, ah! she was not even missed by her infatuated

father, whose whole heart seemed now taken up by the deadly passion that possessed him.

On the third morning from the departure of the girls, Mrs. Grey sat alone in the drawing room.

Miss Cavendish had, as usual, withdrawn to her own chamber.

And Governor Cavendish had reluctantly left his beautiful betrothed to go and receive an official visitor.

Mrs. Grey was sitting in perfect idleness, congratulating herself on the entire success of her plans, when the violent ringing of the hall bell was followed by the opening of the hall door, and then by the opening of the drawing room door, and the announcement of:

"Mr. Alden Lytton to see Mrs. Grey."

Mary Grey turned pale, and started to her feet.

Alden Lytton, dusty and travel-stained, pale and wild, stood before her!

CHAPTER XXXVII

A TERRIBLE ENCOUNTER

YES, pale, wild and disheveled, with indignation and despair stamped on every lineament of his noble face, Alden Lytton stood before Mary Grey.

She arose in consternation.

And the true man and the false woman confronted each other for a moment in silent agony.

Then, trembling and choking with passion, he held out an open letter in his left hand, and dashed his right hand upon it, exclaiming in a broken voice:

"My sister has written to me that you are about to marry Governor Cavendish; that this is no longer a mere newspaper report, but a confessed fact. Laura never told a falsehood in her life; yet I will not believe this unless I hear it confirmed by your own lips. Oh, May, I cannot

believe it!" he suddenly cried out, dropping the hand that held the letter, and, raising his dark eyes, full of anguish, to her face.

While he spoke to her thus—gazed on her thus—she gasped for breath; her color came and went; her bosom rose and fell. She was tremendously agitated, for she loved this handsome, earnest, faithful lover that stood before her—yes, loved him best, him only, of all the human race, and loved him with all the fire and strength of her passionate and perverted heart. She could not answer him. She could only clasp her hands, and raise her eyes to his, and gaze on him imploringly.

"Are you going to marry the millionaire?" he demanded, in a hurried, gasping voice. And his cheek paled to a still deadlier pallor as he awaited her answer.

"Alden—darling!" she panted, and could say no more.

"Are you going to marry that man? Answer—yes, or no!" he cried, breathing quickly, and grasping the back of the chair as if for support.

"Alden, dearest! oh, sit down!" she cried.

"One word—yes, or no!"

"Alden, oh, for Heaven's sake, do not look at me with those terrible eyes! Sit down. Calm yourself."

"Yes or no!"

"Oh, my Lord in heaven, what shall I say? Alden, sit down and listen to me."

"I am listening with all my soul, listening for your answer. But I will not sit down till I hear it. Yes or no?" he sternly demanded.

She uttered a faint shriek, and covered her eyes with her hands.

"Answer!"

"Ah, Heaven, you terrify me so! You are very cruel to me, Alden!" she cried.

"Are you going to marry that man?" he now fiercely demanded, making a step toward her.

She saw that he was in a desperate mood. She had

read and heard of men committing murder and suicide in just such a mood. She clasped her hands in wild affright, and sank back nearly fainting in her chair.

"It is true, then," he whispered, in a tone that thrilled her spirit, and augmented her terror a hundredfold. Desperation quickened her wits.

"What do you mean?" she gasped. "Have I not told you that I would marry you?" she said, holding out a white and trembling hand.

Her words took him by surprise. He had not expected this. Her silence, her agitation, her evasion, and, last of all, her terror, had prepared him to hear the confession of her intended marriage that he had seemed determined to extort from her. He could now scarcely believe that he heard aright. He stood stock-still, and looked at her. He uttered but one word:

"May!"

She saw her advantage and pursued it, though her face was still pale and her voice still faint.

"What do you mean, Alden, by this startling entrance and assault? For it is an assault, darling. You have frightened me almost out of my senses."

"But this newspaper report—this announcement of your engagement, and my sister's letter confirming it all!" he faltered, in bewilderment.

"Well, but, dearest, could you not trust me, notwithstanding all that?" she pleaded. "For did I not promise to marry you?"

"Yes, you did; but—but——" he began.

"I told you that I would surely marry you."

"Yes, you told me so."

"And I told you the truth. I surely will marry you, some time or other, as surely as we both live and you keep true to me."

"If I keep true to you! Oh, May! Oh, my darling, my pride, my joy, my hope, my star of destiny, my guardian angel! what choice have I in keeping true to you?—

to you, to whom I am bound, soul and body, for life and for death, for time and for eternity?" he cried, with all the wild enthusiasm of his insane, boyish passion.

"Then I will surely marry you, sooner or later. Not now, Alden! Not now, dearest; for neither you nor I can afford to marry now. But some time, sooner or later, I will marry you, for, oh, Alden, I love you only, of all the world! And if I do not speak the truth in this, may just Heaven strike me dumb forever!" she said, her whole face, look and tone beaming, trembling, thrilling with the impassioned earnestness of her words.

Even while she spoke, and before she had finished, the young man sank at her feet and put his hands together, and raised them with his uplifted eyes to her face, as in a mute, eloquent prayer for pardon. For a few seconds he could not speak. Then, in a voice broken and faltering, through strong emotion, he said:

"And I could doubt you! doubt you, whom I had every reason to trust utterly! Oh, what a fool and brute I have been! How utterly unworthy of your love and faith! So my sister was mistaken. I should have known that she was. Ah, I could scarcely forgive her writing that letter, even under her mistake, if I did not believe that she could not have known our mutual love and betrothal, and consequently could never have suspected the wrong she was doing you, nor the pain she was giving me. But I fully and freely forgive her; for I am too happy to do otherwise. And, dearest May, you will forgive me also, when I promise never to doubt you again; ever to trust you utterly!"

Mary Grey burst into tears and sobs that seemed to rend her bosom.

"Do not weep so, my beloved! I will never doubt you again. I will trust you utterly!" he repeated, kissing her hands rapturously, and then seating himself by her side.

And now, for what followed in this strange interview,

I cannot account in any other way but by the charitable hypothesis that this beautiful fiend was partially insane.

With a perverted and depraved heart, she had also a weak and silly head. Her passions were therefore stronger than her intellect. And the intense, violent struggle in her soul, between the passion of ambition, that tempted her to marry the wealthy and distinguished Governor of the State, and the passion of love, that pleaded for the faithful lover by her side, must have deranged her reason for the time.

Weeping and sobbing, with her heart beating wildly and her brain whirling dizzily, she yet in some degree controlled her thoughts and selected her words as she cautiously approached her subject.

"Oh, Alden, dearest, you will have to trust me so much!" she said.

"I will trust you through everything," he answered, with enthusiasm.

"Oh, Alden! Oh, my beloved! Your faith will be tried as never man's faith was tried before!" she sighed.

"I will trust you through life and unto death!" he said.

"Oh, if you will do that—if you will do that, we shall be happy at last! Will you trust me through life, Alden?" she pleaded.

"Through life and through death! So help me Heaven!" he answered, with all the earnestness of his most earnest nature. "I will trust you through life and unto death!"

"You may—indeed, you may, for I love you 'unto death!' You best—you only of all created beings!" she answered, fervently.

"I know it, my own, my beloved!" he said, earnestly.

"And, Alden, what I am going to do will be done as much for your sake as for my own. Oh! try to believe it!"

"I do believe it, my adored one!"

"And, oh, Alden! you will wait for me, will you not,

even though we should not be able to marry for years?" she pleaded.

"I will wait for you, my worshiped one, until I get you, if it should take all my life and all yours!" he answered, with an infinite trust.

"It will not take so long as that, unless we die very young," she said, with a faint smile.

"No, I thank Heaven that it will not. For, in a year or two I shall graduate and be called to the bar, and then we shall be able to marry, my darling," said Alden, with beaming eyes, for he was very happy now in his "Fool's Paradise." "But you were going to tell me something, May," he added, with an encouraging smile.

"Yes; listen, Alden! listen patiently, dearest. And do not misjudge me, as others will be sure to do."

"I will never misjudge you again, my angel."

"No, do not; for remember, whatever may happen, I love you, you only, you utterly. And believe that whatever I do will be done for your sake as for my own."

"I will, I will, my darling! Fear not!"

"Listen, then. Alden, dearest, you know that we are both very poor."

"Yes; but I mean to be very rich, for your sake," he said, hopefully.

"And I mean to be very rich for your sake, too, dearest. But, Alden, we will have to make our fortunes separately, and in different ways," she said, so gravely that he looked up uneasily.

"Alden, dearest, you know that we cannot possibly marry yet, for some years."

"Heaven forbid that we should have to wait so long! As for myself, I would gladly, rapturously claim your hand to-day, and take all the chances of poverty."

"Poor boy! where should we live? What should we live on? And what would become of your studies?"

"I care not. I care only for you. I should be sure to find some way to make a fortune for you."

"But I would not let you sacrifice all the ambitious hopes of your youth for my sake; for I am ambitious for you, Alden. I hope to see you rise to the highest honors of your profession—to the bench of the Supreme Court, some day. So you must study your profession until you graduate with *éclat*. That is what you must do. And I? What must I do, Alden, while waiting for you?"

She paused, and looked earnestly into his anxious face.

"I would to Heaven I had wealth, for your sake; to save you from the drudgery of teaching, which I suppose will be your life until I can persuade you to share mine," he said, sorrowfully.

"No, Alden, I cannot teach. I never was really capable of teaching. I had but one accomplishment, and that was rather a skill in copying than a talent for drawing and painting. But I have lost my situation in Mrs. St. John's school; not through any fault of mine, unless it was incompetency. Read that, Alden. I received it some weeks ago from Mrs. St. John," she said, putting the forged letter, with which she had already deceived Governor Cavendish, into the hands of the young man.

He took it, and read it slowly and carefully. And then he returned it to her, in sorrowful silence.

"Now, while you are studying your profession, what am I to do, Alden?"

"Oh, would to Heaven I had a home of safety and comfort to offer you, my own May. But I offer you myself to work for you, my love. If you will give me a husband's right to protect you, I will go and seek employment in some lawyer's office, that will enable me to support you in the necessaries, if not in the comforts of life! Will you let me do that, May?"

"And sacrifice all your ambitious hopes of wealth and fame? No, Alden, no; I love you too much for that. Listen yet, dearest. An honorable home is offered me, where I may find peace, safety, wealth and comfort, while waiting for you."

He started slightly, and looked at her intently.

But she averted her head as she continued:

"And, Alden, if you will only trust me and wait for me as you promised to do, for a few years, at the end of that period of probation I should be able to bring you great wealth. What do you say, Alden? Will you wait for me and trust me as you promised?"

"I told you I would trust you through all things, and wait for you till I get you, if it should be all our lives. And I will do so," he earnestly assured her.

"Bless you! bless you! bless you, Alden," she breathed.

But, oh! how hard it was to look into his true, noble face and come to the point of her discourse.

He saw that she hesitated, and came to her assistance.

"Tell me all your plans, dearest. Let there be perfect confidence between us."

"I will tell you everything. There shall be perfect confidence between us. But, oh, before I do so, assure me again that you believe I love only you of all the world; that all I do will be for your sake; that you believe I am sincere in my intention to marry you at the end of my probation; and that you will trust me through everything and wait for me until I am free!" she earnestly pleaded.

Alden looked at her fondly, and laughed as he said:

"Why, I have assured you over and over again that I will do so. I will swear it, if you please."

"Bless you! bless you! I hoped you would. But, oh! I also feared that you would not. You frightened me so when you came in, oh, you cruel love!"

"Sweetest, forgive me, and trust me with your plans; trust me, even as I trust you. Come, now, what is it you are going to do, which is to put my faith in you to such a terrible trial? Have you discovered eminent talent for the drama? Are you destined to be an illustrious actress? Have you signed a contract with some enterprising and munificent theatrical manager to play tragedy at a thousand dollars a night?—or what?" he gayly inquired.

"I have done none of these things, dearest Alden. I shall not owe my wealth to the stage, nor will you have to marry an actress. You will make a more ambitious match than that, when the time comes," she added, proudly.

"Riddle upon riddle! Conundrum after conundrum! I give them all up. Come, love, hesitate no longer. Trust me with your plans, as I trust you in all things," he said, with a tender gayety.

But she could not look into his honest face and answer him. She averted and bowed her head as she whispered:

"Then, Alden—reminding you again that I love only you; that all I do will be for your sake; that I fully intend to marry you as soon as I shall be free again, I will tell you: The home of peace, safety and affluence that is offered me is here."

He started and changed color, set his teeth, and then became very still and attentive.

She, with her averted face, had not seen the start, or noticed his sudden grimness. She paused merely because she found it so difficult and humiliating to continue.

"Go on," he said, in a low, self-controlled tone.

"And the—position offered me—is that of—a wife," she added, in a low, hesitating voice, and with a shame-bowed head.

"So it is true, then," he whispered, in a husky tone, as he clutched the side of the table to steady himself. Then with a mighty effort of self-control, he said:

"Yes?"

"I do not love him the least bit in the world, Alden. Of course you know I do not. I love only you. My heart is true to you. But he adores me. As the servants say, 'he worships the very ground I walk on.' He will do anything in the world for me. Hush!" she said, suddenly breaking off and listening.

"What is the matter?" he inquired, in a strangely low and steady tone.

"I thought I heard some one in the next room. I was mistaken," she said.

"Yes, you were mistaken. Go on."

Still with averted face she proceeded, with a sort of fatuity, to unveil all her evil plans.

"He will do anything on earth for me. He will make the most princely settlements upon me. And from these I shall be able to help you so much with your studies and profession, Alden. Just see how much I shall be able to help you."

"Yes, I see."

"And the best of all is that we shall not have to wait long. He is old, and in danger of apoplexy. And he will die and leave me a young and wealthy widow!"

"Ah!" said Alden, breathing hard.

"And then, dearest, you can marry me with all my wealth! That will be better than marrying a pauper such as I am now, or an actress such as you imagined I might be. Hush!"

"What now?"

"I am sure I heard some one in the next room."

"You are quite mistaken."

"Well, I suppose I am. And now, Alden, you understand me. While you are studying hard at college I shall be waiting for you, as the wife of an old man whom I endure, so I may come to you at the end of the probation as a wealthy widow!" she said, with an affectation of cheerful confidence.

"Yes, I understand you. But why do you not turn your face toward me? You have not looked at me for the last ten minutes. Look in my face, May," he said, with a strange composure.

She turned a half-ashamed and half-frightened countenance toward him. But when she met his eyes she started, screamed and then stared at him in a sort of horrified silence for a full minute before she found voice to gasp:

"Oh, Alden! after all you do not trust me!"

"Oh, yes; I trust you to be—what you are!" he said.

"You do not believe me! You know you do not!"

"Oh, certainly, I believe you—to be—yourself."

"Alden! Alden! you terrify me almost to death. What do you mean?" she wildly exclaimed, starting to her feet and staring at him in a sort of panic.

"Mary Grey, if a man had ventured to ask me to become a party to such a base and treacherous plan as you have dared to propose, I should have horsewhipped him within an inch of his life, and taken the consequences. But as a woman has done this, I can only expose her treachery to the worthy gentleman whom she plans to deceive!"

"No, no, no! You will not do anything so cruel as that. Oh, but I knew by your face that you had the very demon in you. What a terrible face you have, Alden! But you will not be so cruel!" she said, grasping his hands in the agony of her entreaty; "you will not be so cruel as to forsake me yourself, and cause Mr. Cavendish to abandon me also!"

"Hush! Some one is coming."

She started to her feet, and looked around.

"Ah, Heaven! I am ruined!" she exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

RETRIBUTION

THE door had silently opened, and Governor Cavendish was walking across the floor.

He looked very strangely. His face was deeply flushed, and the veins in his temples were swollen like cords.

He came up to them, but did not speak; yet it was evident from his countenance that he had overheard the treacherous plan proposed by his betrothed.

Mary Grey knew that he had, and she stood panic-stricken and dumb.

Alden was the first to break the dreadful silence.

"I see that you have discovered this lady's—I should rather say, this person's perfidy. Think no more of it, I beseech you, as I shall not. Forget her, as I shall. Doubly false—false to me, and false to you—she is unworthy of a thought or a regret from either."

Governor Cavendish put his shaking hand up to his head, but did not utter a word.

"Thank Heaven, sir, as I do, that you have found her out before it is too late."

The governor waved his hand slightly, and attempted to speak; but his crimson face grew purple; he took a step forward, threw up his arms, and fell heavily to the floor.

Alden had sprung forward to save him, but he was a second too late.

Mrs. Grey screamed.

"Hush! you will frighten Miss Cavendish to death," said Alden, as he bent over the fallen man and tried to raise him.

But the stout form of Charles Cavendish was too much for the slender young man. He ceased his efforts, and rang the bell.

Jerome, the hall footman, answered the summons.

"Help me to lift your master to a lounge. He seems to have fainted," said Alden.

The man, all aghast with horror, lent a hand.

And Alden, with his assistance, lifted the prostrate body and laid it on a lounge.

Alden stooped to examine him. He was nearly black in the face, breathing laboriously, and quite unconscious.

Mary Grey timidly approached the lounge.

Alden turned upon her.

"Go away! How can you bear to look upon your work? If there is a vestige of womanhood or humanity

in you, go, and never come back!" he said, sternly pointing to the door.

With a half-stifled scream, she turned and went out—glad, perhaps, to escape.

"Shall I go and tell Miss Emma?" inquired the frightened servant.

"No, do not alarm her yet. Hurry off as fast as you can go, and bring your master's medical attendant—Dr. Hamilton—Main Street, I think. Tell him to come at once—the governor has had a stroke," said Alden, hastily.

The footman hastened to obey.

Alden got ice water from the cooler in the back hall and mopped the burning head of the unconscious man.

He was still employed in this manner, when, in a shorter time than could have been hoped, the family physician hurried in. He was a stout, gray-haired, rosy-faced man of about sixty.

"Bless my soul! this is very sudden!" he said, as he approached his patient and began to examine his condition; "very sudden! A man of such regular and temperate habits, too. Any exciting cause that you know of, sir?" he inquired of Alden.

"The governor has had some anxieties lately," answered the young man.

"Ah, yes, yes! this public life! Well, Mr.—Mr.——"

"My name is Lytton," said Alden.

"Thank you. Mr. Lytton, we must get him to bed first of all. Where is his daughter?"

"In her own apartment, I presume. I forbade the servants to alarm her just yet."

"Ah, quite right. We will get him comfortably to bed first," said the doctor.

Alden rang the bell and summoned several of the servants, whose united strength it required to lift the heavy, helpless form of the insensible man and convey it to his chamber.

When he was undressed and put to bed, and when all

that medical skill could do for him then was done, Alden prepared to depart from the house.

He wrote a respectful and sympathetic note to Miss Cavendish, offering his services in any capacity in which they might be required, and giving his address—The Planters' Hotel.

He left the note with Dr. Hamilton, who remained beside his patient, requesting him to deliver it to the young lady after she should have seen her father.

He went back to his hotel and shut himself up in his solitary room to give vent to the great agony of his soul, that had been suppressed for the last hour by the force of a powerful will.

His youthful passion for the beautiful traitress was dying certainly, but it was dying a violent and agonizing death.

Hours passed, and he sat there still. The dinner gong sounded, but he paid no attention to it.

Late in the evening a card was brought to his room.

It bore the name of "Horatius Hamilton, M.D."

He went down at once to the public parlor to see the doctor.

"I thank you very much for calling, Dr. Hamilton. How is the governor?" he inquired, advancing to greet his visitor.

"He seems more comfortable. He breathes more easily. But he is still quite unconscious," replied the physician.

"May I ask you what will be the probable result?" inquired Alden.

"It is impossible to say at this juncture," replied the doctor, with professional reserve.

"And his daughter?" questioned the young man.

"Ah! it is on her part that I have called upon you. Soon after you left I sent for Miss Cavendish to meet me in the library. And I told her, as cautiously as I could, of her father's sudden illness, making as light of it and

speaking as hopefully as I could; more so, perhaps, than I ought to have done."

"Yet, if I may venture to say so, I think you were right in doing so, sir," said Alden.

"Well, perhaps I was. Then I took her to her father's chamber. She was inexpressibly shocked and grieved at seeing his condition. But with wonderful self-command she controlled her feelings, and took her place at his bedside."

"She is a young lady of rare strength of character," Alden remarked.

"Yes, she is. There was very little that she could do for her father but sit and watch him. After a little while I gave her your note. She thanked me, and read it; but made no comment then."

"It was nothing more than an offer of my services, if they should be in any way required," Alden explained.

"Yes, I know; for a little later on, when I told her that it would be necessary to have some gentleman in the house to remain with him to-night, she at once handed your note to me to read, and then requested me to call on my way to my office and convey her thanks to you and ask you to come and sit up with her father to-night. You can do so, without inconvenience?"

"Certainly, and most willingly. When shall I report for duty?"

"Immediately, or as soon as you possibly can."

"I will go immediately," said the young man, rising.

"I am going to look in upon some of my patients, but I shall see Mr. Cavendish again to-night," said the doctor, as with a low bow he left the parlor.

Alden Lytton returned to his room only to lock up a few of his effects, and then he took his hat and hurried away to the government house.

Though it was not late in the evening, the front of the house was quite dark and deserted looking, but for one dim light that was burning in an upper window.

Alden was admitted by the hall footman, and shown into the back parlor, where only a lamp was burning.

Jerome apologized for the semi-darkness by explaining that:

"Miss Emma had ordered that the gas should not be lighted, but that everything should be kept dark and quiet throughout the house."

"Go to Miss Cavendish and present my respects, and say that I am here waiting her orders," said the young gentleman.

Jerome went away with his message, and in a few moments returned with Miss Emma's thanks, and a request that Mr. Lytton would walk upstairs.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"THIS IS THE END OF EARTH"

ALDEN followed the footman up to the second floor, where, in a spacious front chamber, richly furnished and now dimly lighted, the stricken statesman lay.

"In a deep, crimson-cushioned armchair, near the head of the bed, sat his daughter.

At the foot of the bed, in another chair, sat Aunt Moll, the oldest and most favored female domestic in the family.

Miss Cavendish arose at once to receive the visitor, holding out her hand, and whispering:

"I thank you so very much for coming to us in our trouble."

At the same moment Jerome wheeled forward a chair.

"Please sit down. There is little to be done now but watch," whispered Emma.

The young man bowed and took his seat.

Jerome went and trimmed the taper and stirred the fire, and then withdrew from the room.

And so the watch commenced.

The patient lay perfectly quiet, and breathing easily.

"We must wait for a change," murmured Miss Cavendish, in answer to Alden's inquiring look. "We must wait for a change which will decide the case, favorably, I must hope."

After that there was a long, uninterrupted silence.

Alden, with his bruised and aching heart, wondered where the fair fiend who had caused all this woe had hidden herself, and whether Miss Cavendish suspected the cause of her father's attack.

But, of course, he could not know; for this was a subject he could not discuss, even if conversation had been permissible in the sickroom.

Meanwhile where was the double traitress?

She was locked in her own room, weeping sometimes bitterly over her blighted ambition, and occasionally wiping her eyes and comforting herself with looking at the magnificent parure of diamonds, the governor's last gift to her.

Once she had gone to the door of the sickchamber and rapped. And when it was opened by the doctor, she had inquired as to the state of the patient, and had been informed that he needed quiet more than anything else just then.

Afterward she waylaid Dr. Hamilton on his way out and inquired more particularly. But the reserved physician was so cautious in his answers that she obtained but little satisfaction from him.

Then she went into the dining room, where the table had been set as usual, and where the untouched dishes were growing cold. She was such a sound animal withal that she ate her dinner with almost as good a relish as if she had not lost her lovers and her splendid prospects at one blow.

Only perhaps she drank a little more wine than was good for her. After the doctor left that evening she went

no more to the door of the sickroom, but remained locked in her chamber, sometimes weeping bitterly over the destruction of her splendid prospects, sometimes fortifying her mind with the sight of her magnificent jewels.

At length, when she was tired enough to go to bed, she rang for a servant, and sent a message to Miss Cavendish, inquiring how Governor Cavendish was now, and if she, Mrs. Grey, could be of any service.

She received an answer to the effect that Governor Cavendish was no better, and no worse; that Mr. Lytton would sit by him through the night, and that Mrs. Grey's services would not be required.

"He there! Now, he will tell Emma Cavendish all about it, and I shall lose my last friend!" she said to herself, in dismay. And this fear kept her awake many hours.

But she was mistaken. For, not only was all conversation prohibited in the sickroom, but Alden Lytton would never, under any circumstances, have said one word to add an additional sorrow to the devoted daughter watching by her father's deathbed.

When he heard the message from Mrs. Grey, deceitfully offering her services, he simply shuddered. He felt that he could not have borne the addition of her presence in the sickroom.

But when he heard the answer returned by Miss Cavendish, declining those services with thanks, he felt relieved and breathed freely. But he never dreamed of giving Miss Cavendish so much additional pain as she would suffer in hearing from him of the perfidy of Mrs. Grey.

The watch in the sickroom continued.

At midnight the doctor looked in again.

Finding Miss Cavendish still beside her father and looking very pale, he peremptorily ordered her off to bed, saying that he himself, with Mr. Lytton and Aunt Moll, would keep watch until morning; and that if any change should occur, either for the better or for the worse, he would at once summon the daughter.

So Emma stooped and pressed a kiss upon the unconscious lips of her father, breathed a prayer for his recovery and slipped from the room.

Alden and the doctor continued the watch. All remained quiet in the sickchamber until near morning, when the patient exhibited signs of restlessness, if not of returning consciousness.

The doctor stooped over him and inquired:

"How do you find yourself, Mr. Cavendish?"

"Water!" faintly murmured the sinking man.

Alden arose quietly and got a glass of water, which the doctor took and held to the lips of the sufferer, who drank a little with difficulty.

"How do you find yourself now, sir?" again inquired Dr. Hamilton.

"Well," murmured Mr. Cavendish, as he closed his eyes and relapsed into quietness.

But very soon he opened them again, and murmured some word indistinctly.

Again the doctor bent over him.

"What will you have, Mr. Cavendish?" he inquired.

The dying man moved his lips once or twice ineffectually, and then with difficulty enunciated one word:

"Emma."

"Go and call Miss Cavendish," said the doctor, addressing Aunt Moll.

The woman arose, and hurriedly, yet silently, crossed the chamber.

Emma Cavendish was not far off. She had not retired to bed, or even taken off her dress. She had simply laid down on the sofa in the hall, outside her father's chamber. So she entered the room almost immediately, and went up to the bedside of her father.

"Open the window," said the doctor.

Alden Lytton went quietly and unclosed and threw back the shutters, letting in the early morning sunshine.

Old Moll at the same moment extinguished the taper.

The full light fell on the face of Charles Cavendish, revealing a fatal change.

His face, lately so deeply flushed, was now deadly pale; his breathing was short and quick, but the light of consciousness had returned to his eyes, and those eyes were fixed with unutterable longing on his daughter's bending face.

He murmured something that she bent her ear close to his lips to hear. And then she raised her head, addressing the doctor, who stood at the table pouring some liquid from a bottle into a glass. She said:

"Dr. Hamilton, my father wishes to be left alone with me for a few minutes."

"Very well, my dear Miss Cavendish, but I must positively administer a stimulant first," answered the physician, approaching the bed with the glass in his hand.

Emma Cavendish tenderly lifted her father's head, while Dr. Hamilton held the glass to his lips.

Mr. Cavendish swallowed the contents with some difficulty, and then lay back on his pillow.

The doctor stood by the bed for a few moments to watch the effect. It seemed beneficial. The patient breathed more freely, and even muttered the words:

"Thanks. Leave me now."

And the doctor, the young man and the old nurse, all withdrew from the room, leaving the dying father and his daughter alone together.

They went, however, no further than the hall outside the chamber, and there they sat upon the sofa, where Emma had so lately lain; and they waited.

They waited longer than the few minutes for which they had been requested to absent themselves.

They waited half an hour—three-quarters of an hour.

And then the dead silence was broken by a faint scream.

The doctor went and opened the door, looked in, and uttered an exclamation that brought all the others to him.

They entered the room together.

The soul of Charles Cavendish was gone, and his daughter lay in a swoon across his body.

CHAPTER XL

"ALL IS LOST"

THEY raised Emma Cavendish up. She came to herself.

"Come away, my darling child. He is dead," said the old nurse, tenderly, putting her arm around the waist of the bereaved daughter to lead her from the room, while the doctor, as a mere matter of form, felt the still pulse of the body, and Alden stood gazing on in awful silence.

"Yes, quite dead," whispered the doctor.

"No, not dead; he is not dead; this is dead, because he has left it; but he lives," murmured his daughter, in a sweet, low tone, and so quitely that all wondered at her calmness. Stooping down, she kissed the vacated form upon the forehead, then followed the old nurse from the room to her own chamber, where she sat down in her easy-chair by the fire, wondering at herself, reproaching herself because, while she perfectly understood the great sorrow that had fallen upon her, she felt so little pain.

The truth was that the blow had been so sudden, so shocking, as to stun her into quietness. She comprehended, but could not realize the situation. She had not yet missed him. But the time would come, and soon enough, when this once fondly cherished, but now most desolated daughter, must deeply feel the loss of him who had at once been father, mother, companion, teacher and all to her.

The old nurse, seeing her so calm, thought she might be safely trusted to herself; so she just pushed the footstool

under her feet, and then left the room to go and attend to the numerous domestic duties that at this crisis devolved solely upon herself.

Meanwhile, in the chamber of death, Dr. Hamilton and Alden Lytton with reverent hands composed the dead body upon the bed and covered it smoothly with the white quilt to await the arrival of the undertaker, for whom the doctor had already sent.

"And now is there any other service I can render before leaving the house, or afterward?" inquired Alden.

"Yes," answered the doctor; "Mr. Cavendish has an aged mother, in very feeble health, who is living at his country place, Blue Cliffs, near Wendover. She must be notified of this sad event. But it will not do to telegraph, or even to write to her. Such news suddenly told would kill her. We shall have to telegraph to the rector of Wendover church, and ask him to go to Blue Cliffs, and cautiously break the news of this calamity to the bereaved mother. I don't know his name, but I presume a telegram sent simply to the rector of Wendover church would be sure to reach him."

"Oh, certainly. If it reaches Wendover, it will reach him; for everybody in that little town knows him. But I can give you his name. It is Dr. Goodwin."

"Thanks. Can I trouble you to send off the telegram?"

"Certainly. I will do so immediately, and anything else in my power."

"There is nothing more at present, thank you, Mr. Lytton," answered the doctor, as he drew his notebook from his pocket, tore out a blank leaf, and hastily wrote the message, which he handed to Alden.

The young man took it and was about to withdraw when the doctor for the first time noticed the pale and haggard look of misery on his face.

"Mr. Lytton," he said, "you are not well. When you have dispatched that message you had better go home and go to bed. Rest may restore you."

"Thanks. I am not ill," answered Alden, with a wretched attempt to smile, as he left the room.

A few moments afterward the old nurse softly entered.

"I have had breakfast got ready for you gentlemen, sir, airlier than common, which I thought you would be in need of it, after being up all night," she said.

"You are very kind," answered the doctor. "Where is Miss Cavendish?"

"In her own room, sir, which she is much quieter like than any one might think. I sent her some tea and toast on a waiter. I think as she bears up very well, sir. But I met Mr. Alden as he was a coming downstairs, and he looks awful. And when I ast him to stay to breakfast, he just stopped and stared at me a minute and then went by me like the wind. Ah! he takes it awful hard, that young man does. And he no kin to the governor, neither," said the nurse, shaking her head.

"He looks badly," said the doctor, as he followed the woman to the breakfast room and to the table, where he seated himself, while she stood and poured out his coffee.

"Am I to breakfast alone?" inquired the doctor, with a faint smile.

"I'm feared so, sir. Mrs. Grey, she never wakes up till about nine o'clock," answered the old "auntie."

"Ah, Mrs. Grey! I had quite forgotten that poor lady. And, of course, if she has not yet awakened, she knows nothing of what has happened," said the doctor, gravely pondering.

"Oh, la! no, sir! She don't know nothing at all about it," said the nurse, as she set a steaming, fragrant cup of coffee by the doctor's plate.

"Poor lady! This will be a heavy blow to her, indeed, if all is true that is reported," muttered the doctor, speaking to himself rather than to his aged attendant.

"It's all true, sir. Sure as a gun! Him and her was a gwine to be married on Soft-Tuesday," answered the woman.

And by Soft-Tuesday she probably meant Shrove Tuesday.

"Humph, humph!" muttered the doctor, who did not wish being betrayed into gossiping about the late governor's family affairs with a domestic, even so old and faithful a servant as this one was.

And he finished his breakfast in silence.

Where was Mary Grey all this time?

In bed and asleep!

After her late vigil she slept soundly, and far into the forenoon, unconscious of the confusion that death had brought into the house.

It was ten o'clock when at length she opened her beautiful, baleful eyes. At first awaking she had totally forgotten the terrible events of the preceding day. Then she felt a vague sense of uneasiness that she could not account for. And then the full light of memory flashed upon her.

"Oh, my Lord, my Lord!" she said, as she sprang out of bed; "I have lost all—all! My young lover's heart and my old betrothed's wealth! What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?"

She went and threw open the window shutters, and raised the window to let in the bright and bracing sunshine and air of winter.

She had had a good, long, sound sleep, and that had restored her physical and mental strength. And now the crisp morning air restored her spirits. She felt invigorated and encouraged.

"After all," she said, hopefully, "all may not be lost. I am not at all sure that the old gentleman heard one word that passed between Alden and myself. He was certainly no eavesdropper; not he! And so, of course, his attack may not have been caused by any excitement on my account. Old gentlemen like him drop off with apoplexy under all circumstances. And if he only lives for a few days, and recovers his consciousness, if not his health, he

may yet make a will and leave me a handsome provision. Oh, then, if he did not hear my conversation with Alden, and if he should only recover consciousness long enough to recognize and provide for me, how happy I may yet be! That will be better than marrying him. Then I may easily—no, not so very easily, either, but I may, by perseverance, effect a reconciliation with my young lover, and both may be very happy! Ah, if only he did not overhear us, and if only he lives long enough to make a will! I will ring at once and inquire. No doubt he is better. People always get better in the morning," she said, as she arose and rang her bell.

Matilda, one of the housemaids, answered it.

"How is Governor Cavendish this morning? Go and give my love to Miss Cavendish and inquire," said Mrs. Grey.

"If you please, ma'am——" began the girl, and then she stopped and cried.

"What is the matter?" inquired Mrs. Grey, in some uneasiness.

"Please, ma'am, he's gone! Oh! oh! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" the girl burst forth, weeping.

"Gone!" echoed Mrs. Grey in consternation.

"Oh, yes, indeed, ma'am! Dead and gone! Dead and gone! Oh! Oh, dear! Oh! Oh, dear!"

"Heaven and earth! Is he dead, then? When did he die?" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, in a faint voice, and with an ashen cheek.

"Oh, dear! This—this morn—this morning at about sun—sunrise, ma'am!" sobbed the girl.

"Oh, my Lord! It is all over, then! All over!" cried Mrs. Grey, with a hysterical shriek, as she threw herself weeping and sobbing upon the bed.

"Oh! don't go on so, ma'am! please don't!" pleaded the girl, frightened into quietness by the extreme excitement of the lady.

But Mrs. Grey only screamed and cried the more.

"All is over! All is lost! I wish I, too, were dead!" And she rolled and groveled on the bed.

The girl ran away in affright.

CHAPTER XLI

THE SERPENT AND THE DOVE

INSTEAD of going directly to invoke the help of the old nurse, as she ought to have done, she ran to the room of Miss Cavendish and entered hastily without knocking, and exclaimed:

"Oh! if you please, miss, do come to Mrs. Grey! She's takin' on awful! awful!"

Miss Cavendish lifted her head and stared for a moment. But the girl repeated, in half-breathless excitement:

"She's a goin' on horrid, miss! most horrid to hear! Oh, please, do come and see if you can coax her to stop!"

Emma arose in silence and went to Mary Grey's room, preceded by the frightened girl, who, with trembling hand, opened the door for the young lady.

Miss Cavendish passed into the room, where she found Mrs. Grey on the bed, rolling and groveling, crying and sobbing in hysterical agony.

Emma stopped short and gazed at the sufferer, and saw by the bloodless cheeks, drawn lips, corrugated brow, and sunken and inflamed eyes, that this was real and not simulated grief. But as she knew nothing of this woman's double-dyed duplicity, so she could not suspect that all this passionate wailing came not from the sorrow of a loving heart, mourning for the loss of a beloved friend, but from the bitter, bitter disappointment of an ambitious and scheming adventuress, who had staked her all in the game of life and lost it. And Emma pitied Mrs. Grey,

and reproached herself that she could not feel this violent grief. She thought how good and great, how handsome and attractive her father had been, and she did not think it strange that the young widow had loved him ardently, and that she now mourned him passionately. She did not know the woman as Alden Lytton knew her, or as you and I know her, reader.

All her instinctive dislike of the coquette disappeared, and as she contemplated her anguish, and remembered how her father had loved this woman, her own heart melted with sympathy. She went to Mary Grey and put her arms around her, and, weeping, said:

"Do not grieve so. Try to compose yourself. See, dear! I am his daughter, and I have not shed a tear till now. I could not, somehow."

"Oh-h-h!" sobbed the woman, with moans breathed from the very depth of her heart. "Oh! I have lost my all! my all! I had but one dear friend in the world, and him I have lost! Oh, I wish I could follow him, for I am desolate! desolate on the face of the earth!"

This bitter grief was wholly sincere, though it came from disappointed ambition rather than from bereaved affection. But the words in which she expressed it were half false.

Miss Cavendish could not know this. She only saw the grief, and sought to soothe it.

"Do not weep so wildly, dear," she gently murmured through her own falling tears. "And do not say so bitterly that you have no friend left in the world, now that he is gone. I, his daughter, will always be your friend, for his sake."

Mary Grey paused in her passionate wailings to listen to these words, which seemed to open up a bright, new vista in her future life. Yet as soon as she fully heard and understood them, she resumed her crying and sobbing. For it was a remunerative occupation, she thought, which

it would not do to stop suddenly now; though now there was less occasion for it.

"There, there; weep no more, dear. Be consoled. Because my father loved you, you shall be my sister, and share my home. Listen, dear. The only comfort I can take now will be in cherishing those whom my dear father loved and left behind. His love and his loss is a bond of sympathy between us, dear, that not even death can dissolve," murmured Emma Cavendish, so gently and sweetly that the false-hearted woman drew her down and kissed her with something like real feeling.

A few minutes after this there came a rap at the chamber door, followed by the entrance of Miss Cavendish's maid, who came up and whispered a few words in the ear of her mistress.

"Tell the doctor that I will be down directly. And show him into the library," said Miss Cavendish.

The girl went to take her message.

"I must leave you for a short time, dear. Dr. Hamilton has sent word to me that he has received a telegram from Blue Cliffs—from Wendover, I suppose, in fact, but dated at Blue Cliffs," said Emma Cavendish, as she pressed a kiss on Mrs. Grey's brow, and left her.

She went softly downstairs and entered the library, where she found Dr. Hamilton waiting for her. She greeted him courteously and sat down.

"I have a telegram from Dr. Goodwin, Miss Cavendish. Shall I read it to you?" inquired the doctor.

"If you please."

Dr. Hamilton unrolled the printed slip and read:

"WENDOVER, January 25th, 18—.

"Message received with great grief. Mrs. Cavendish too infirm to travel. Directs the remains to be forwarded to Blue Cliffs, for interment in the family vault. Dr. Hamilton will act for Mrs. Cavendish. Will write this morning.

ABLE GOODWIN."

"I thank you, sir. It would appear by this that my grandmother received the news very quietly," said Emma Cavendish.

"My dear young lady, the very old usually receive all things very quietly. Theirs is 'a time of peace,' as Tennyson writes," said the doctor gravely.

"You will kindly do as she has requested? You will act for her? There is no one else, you know."

"My dear Miss Cavendish, of course, I am entirely at your service and hers."

"Then I should be very grateful if you would arrange for the removal as soon as possible. I wish to get out of this—to get out of this house, where I have no longer any right to stay. I must remain here as long as my dear father's body is here, and then accompany it to Blue Cliffs," said Miss Cavendish, struggling hard to keep down the rising emotion that the very name of her beloved father called up.

"My dear young lady, everything will be done with the utmost dispatch consistent with the rendering of due honors to the remains of the late governor."

"Ah! I had forgotten that. I was thinking only of my beloved father, and that we might take his body to our old, quiet home, and lay it at rest among his kindred. Oh! I did not reflect on the parade the public would be sure to make over the deceased governor. But, Dr. Hamilton, is it really so necessary? It would not be to his taste, you know."

"I know it would not. But, Miss Cavendish, it is unavoidable. You need not, however, suffer any annoyance here. Keep the upper rooms, and have your meals brought to you. And now, my dear child, you must really go and lie down. You are very strong, to govern your feelings as well as you do. But all this self-government will tell upon your health, if you are not very careful. Go now, immediately, and take your much needed rest," said Dr.

Hamilton, gently, as he led her to the door and held it open for her.

She bowed and passed out.

As she walked through the grand hall, she noticed several groups of grave dignitaries of the State standing about and conversing in low, solemn tones, while various officials passed swiftly and silently in and out of the rooms and up and down the stairs. As she went by the open door of the state dining-room she observed some workingmen quietly putting up black tapestry on the walls. And the low "tap-tap" of their little hammers was almost the only sound to be heard.

Already the house was full of the silent, subdued hurry and confusion that, for the first few hours, surround the holy dead.

Through all this Miss Cavendish slipped softly until she gained the sanctuary of her own chamber.

CHAPTER XLII

THE HEIRESS

THE week was a time of great trial to the bereaved daughter. For while, in the seclusion of her own room, she was quietly mourning the loss of her father, the whole household, as well as the city and the State officials, were busy with their preparations for the ostentatious funeral procession of the governor. But she kept her chamber on the first floor, and tried to see and hear as little of the bustle as possible.

The sudden death of the governor had been formally announced to the House of Delegates then in session. And they had passed the usual resolutions in his honor—or their own—and then given themselves a holiday, to take part in the public parade of the funeral.

All the public offices were closed, and all the public buildings were festooned with black.

The body of the late governor was laid in state in the drawing-room of the executive mansion, the walls of which were hung with black serge.

And all persons who, from respect or curiosity, or any other motive, wished to do so, might come and gaze at will upon the earthly tenement now vacated by Charles Cavendish.

And all day long crowds passed through the rooms of the government house—crowds of all classes of the people, of all ages and of both sexes—covering the rich carpets with mud, and filling the air with odors that were not those of frankincense and myrrh.

But Miss Cavendish saw no one except the servant who waited on her, and Mrs. Grey, who soothed her with the praises of the departed, and Dr. Hamilton, who called daily to inquire after the health of the ladies, and to see if he could in any way, professional or otherwise, be of any service to them.

Alden Lytton called also every day, but his inquiries and offers of service were always addressed to Dr. Hamilton, who, seeing the pallor of his face, constantly refused assistance, and earnestly recommended him to take care of himself, and before all to go home.

"I shall stay here until the remains of my dear friend are taken from the city. When I see the body once on board the cars, I shall leave for the university," answered Alden on the last occasion on which the doctor counseled him.

At length the last day of excitement came; the day on which the body of Charles Cavendish was to be removed from the executive mansion and escorted with great magnificence to the railway station, and laid in state in the superb funeral car on the train that was to take it to Wendover.

And the city was the scene of a solemn pageant. Not

only all the public buildings of the city, but all the private houses on each side of the street through which the funeral procession was to pass, were deeply draped with black.

Before and around the square occupied by the executive mansion military and civic and masonic companies were paraded and marshaled into form.

There were belted officers and scarfed marshals, and prancing steeds, and waving plumes, and rolling drums, flaunting banners, gleaming steel, and all the magnificent and splendid pageantry that forms the funeral procession of a great public officer.

A superb hearse received the corpse, and was attended by a special guard of honor immediately around it.

It was followed by a close mourning coach containing the bereaved daughter, her unworthy companion, one faithful maidservant, and the family physician.

Before and behind the hearse and coach, the military and civic companies marched slowly, with bowed heads and trailing weapons, and flags and banners at half-mast.

And so in due time they reached the railway station, which was also heavily draped with black serge.

With due reverence the pall-bearers, who were some of the highest dignitaries of the State, removed the coffin from the hearse and solemnly bore it into the car that had been especially fitted up to receive it.

This was something like a drawing-room car, except that its walls and chairs were covered with black velvet, and its little windows were curtained with black silk, and that it contained no mirrors, but one long narrow table down the middle, also covered with black velvet. On this table the pall-bearers in solemn silence placed the coffin, covering it carefully with the black velvet pall.

They then took their seats in order, three on each side of the table.

Then a small group of two deeply veiled ladies, a servant woman and an elderly gentleman entered the car and seated themselves at the end, at the foot of the coffin.

These were, of course, Miss Cavendish, Mrs. Grey, their female attendant and Dr. Hamilton.

In ten minutes the train moved out of the station.

The journey was a long and very quiet one. The train was the express, and it stopped at but few stations.

And these were all heavily draped in black serge, and crowded with eager, pushing people, assembled to see the funeral car and coffin of their late governor. Of course, they could see nothing but the outside of the car, with its little black curtained windows.

At these stations, passengers from other cars went out and refreshed themselves. But the passengers in the funeral car kept their seats through all that long and trying journey.

It was midnight when the train reached Wendover.

Here the railway station and the few public buildings of the little country town were deeply draped in mourning.

Here also, late as the hour was, the military and civil officers of the county, and nearly all the inhabitants of the town, were assembled to receive the remains of the late governor. The coffin was reverently taken from the car and borne in torchlight procession to the town hall, whose walls were hung with black, and where it was laid in state.

Here a guard of honor, composed of the principal citizens, relieved the late watchers, who, with Miss Cavendish, Mrs. Grey and their attendants, went to the Reindeer for the night.

To be brief, the next day the little country town, on a very much smaller scale, repeated the pageantry of the great capital city.

And then the coffin was put into a handsome hearse, and escorted with great pomp to Blue Cliffs, where it was received by the venerable pastor of the parish, and by the aged mother of the deceased. And where finally, with the last sacred Christian ceremonies, it was consigned to the family vault.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE BLUE CLIFFS

THE meeting between Emma Cavendish and her aged grandmother had been very quiet. A few tender kisses had been exchanged; a few silent tears had been shed; and that was all.

Then Emma had taken the hand of Mrs. Grey, who during the first moments of this meeting had stood a little apart, and presented her to the old lady, saying:

"Grandma, this is Mrs. Mary Grey, of whom, I suppose, my dear father must have written to you."

The old lady held out her hand hesitatingly, and looked perplexed from one to the other.

"I—don't remember," she said, at last, with the uncertainty and feebleness of age.

"My dear father was to have married this lady, you know," said Emma.

"Oh, yes! I recollect now!" said Mrs. Cavendish.

"He loved her, grandma, and we must cherish her for his sake," continued Miss Cavendish.

"And I am a widow and an orphan, friendless and desolate. And if he had not died so soon, I should have been his cherished wife and your dutiful daughter," said Mary Grey pathetically, for she did not half like her reception by Mrs. Cavendish.

"If my dear Charley loved you and would have married you, you shall still be my daughter, and, as Emma says, we will cherish you for his sake. Kiss me, my dear. You look very young to have been engaged to a man of my Charley's age," said the old lady, kindly.

Mary Grey stooped and kissed her very sweetly.

"And now, Emma, take her yourself, and give her her choice among the spare rooms. I think the corner room, with the view of Mount Columbus, is the pleasantest. I

would attend to you myself, dear, only you see I am too feeble to stir from my chamber without help. You will excuse me?" she asked, taking the hand of her who might have been her daughter-in-law.

"Oh, say no more! You are so good to me. Oh, how can I tell you how much I thank you?" said Mrs. Grey, as she raised the venerable hand of the old lady to her lips.

"My poor Charley's betrothed!" said the old mother, with emotion, as she tottered to her feet, held out her arms, and drew her to her heart in a fond embrace.

And thus the serpent was received into the bosom of the affectionate and confiding family.

"There, Emma; take her, dear. She is nothing but a girl after all. Be good to her, and give her the best in the house. She would have been the mistress of the house if poor Charley had lived, you know. Let her now be its most cherished inmate," said Mrs. Cavendish, gently releasing her.

And then as Mary Grey, with her deep, black-bordered handkerchief held to her face, was weeping, or affecting to weep, the old lady, in a flighty, doting way, recalled her again, and once more took her hand.

"Did you love my Charley so much, poor dear?"

"Oh, more than my life! Such a man! How could I help worshiping him?" exclaimed the deceiver, with well-feigned emotion.

"How, indeed!" echoed the partial old mother. "How could you help loving and worshiping him? He was so handsome, so dignified and gracious in his manner; so good and wise in heart and head! I am very sorry for you, my poor child. Sorrier for you than I am for myself. For, ah me! I shall soon be with my son; very, very soon. A few short months, perhaps a few short days, and I, too, shall pass through the golden gates and enter the splendor of the New Jerusalem! But you, my poor child, are so young—so young that you may have to live

full half a century in this sorrowful world without him! You will never meet a man who will be able to console you for his loss."

"Oh, never! never! never!" wailed the widow with well-simulated despair.

"No, for no woman who had ever loved Charles Cavendish could ever sink to a lower man."

"Oh, no! no! no!" cried the widow, bursting into hysterical sobs.

"There, there! I have worked your feelings up too much, my poor, stricken child. Take her, Emma. Take her out and comfort her," said Mrs. Cavendish, putting the widow's hand in her granddaughter's.

And Emma Cavendish, who never suspected Mary Grey's duplicity and hypocrisy, but who pitied her for what she supposed to be her nervous weakness and want of self-control, led her gently from the room, and to divert her thoughts, took her up to the second floor and through the principal chambers of the house, from which to choose her own apartments.

And Mary Grey chose the spacious corner room whose windows looked out upon the towering heights of Mount Columbus, the highest of the Blue Cliffs.

The next morning Mr. Fergusson, the Wendover lawyer, who was also the solicitor of the deceased governor, arrived at Blue Cliffs Hall, and had a short private interview with Dr. Hamilton, who had not yet left the house.

After which the family were all called together in the chamber of old Mrs. Cavendish, where Mr. Fergusson produced and read to them the last will and testament of Charles Cavendish, in which, after a few legacies, he devised the whole of his real and personal estate to his daughter Emma, appointing as the trustees of the estate, the guardians of his heiress and the executors of his will: first his mother, Mrs. Winifred Dorothy Cavendish; secondly his sister, Mrs. Susannah Wesley; and thirdly his friend and pastor, the Rev. Dr. Joel Barton.

This will was dated nearly two years before the testator's decease, which accounted for two omissions—the omission of Mary Grey's name, and that of his sister's second married name; the advent of Mary Grey into his life, and the marriage and departure of his widowed sister, both having occurred within the last twelve months.

It will be seen that this will left Emma Cavendish in a very peculiar and trying position. A girl of seventeen, heiress of a vast fortune, well provided by her father's will with guardians and trustees, and yet, by the events that had transpired since that will was made, left, to all intents and purposes, sole mistress of herself and her fortune.

For one of her guardians, the Rev. Dr. Joel Barton, had gone to the better world; another, Mrs. Wesley, had married and gone to India; while the remaining one, Mrs. Cavendish, was sinking into dotage.

The will, however, satisfied ever one, except Mary Grey.

To her it was another bitter disappointment.

Being of a very sanguine temperament and presumptuous mind, she had hoped against hope that Mr. Cavendish might possibly have made a recent will, and left her a portion of his immense fortune.

And now she discovered that he had made no later will, and had left her nothing.

In her chagrin and mortification, she burst into tears and hurried from the room.

"How she loved him, poor child! Go after her, Emma, my dear, and try to comfort her," said the tender-hearted, unsuspicious old lady.

And Emma Cavendish, never dreaming that Mary Grey had ever cherished such absurd hopes as had now fallen through, but who sincerely pitied what she took to be a morbid and excessive sensibility, hastened after the little hypocrite to console her.

And that very evening, when Mrs. Cavendish sent for

Emma to have a little social talk with her before retiring to bed, the old lady said:

"I pity that poor, sweet young creature so much, Emma. More than I pity myself or you. Do you think that so strange, dear?"

"Yes, grandma, I do; for you were his mother and I was his daughter. We were the two nearest to him of all the world," said Emma, who began to fear that the old lady's mind was giving way, even faster than she had supposed.

"But, my dear, see here. I, his mother, shall very, very soon be with him. And you, his daughter, will some day, I trust in Providence, meet some noble-minded man, who will be the comfort, support and joy of your life. While she, poor child, has met and loved just such a man—met and loved and lost him! And in all her long life to come she can never be happy again. For no woman who has ever loved my Charley could ever descend to love another man."

Emma sighed, and said nothing. She could scarcely agree with her grandmother in opinion, yet she would not oppose her.

"And now, my dear Emma, we must do all we can for poor Charley's bereaved love. We cannot give her back the lover she has lost, and the husband she has missed, but we can at least provide handsomely for her. You are so rich, Emma! so very, very rich! And when I go to the better land you will be richer still, for all I leave behind. You will have so much, Emma, and she will have nothing, unless we give it to her. We must provide for her."

"We will, dear grandma. It is my earnest wish to do so," answered Miss Cavendish.

"You are a good girl, Emma. Good-night. Heaven bless you, my dear child!" said the old lady, as she dismissed her granddaughter.

And so Mary Grey found herself, as the old lady had

said, the most honored and cherished inmate of the family —honored like a distinguished guest, and cherished as a dear daughter.

But she was very far from being happy. She knew that she enjoyed all these rights, privileges and luxuries upon sufferance only. She knew her position to be a very precarious one.

Discovery, like the sword of Damocles, hung by a hair over her head. And then she would probably be sent from her home of elegant appointments and lazy luxury out into the hard world, to choose between work and beggary.

And her fear of discovery was augmented a thousandfold by a letter from Laura Lytton to Emma Cavendish—a letter of sincere sympathy and condolence it was, in which Laura offered to come and stay with her friend during the approaching Easter holidays. But Laura Lytton's letter, like Governor Cavendish's will, altogether omitted to mention the name of Mary Grey.

That looked very badly.

"She does not know that you are here, dear. How should she even think of it? I have not written to her since my dear father left us. I must write now, however," said Emma, as she withdrew to answer the letter.

Mary Grey's heart was filled with fear. Suppose Laura Lytton should come at Easter? Suppose she had heard from her brother all that had passed between Alden and herself on that fatal morning of the governor's seizure? She would expose it all to Mrs. Cavendish and Emma.

And then——

CHAPTER XLIV

AT BLUE CLIFF HALL

By a singular train of circumstances, Emma Cavendish, the richest heiress in the country, found herself at seven-

teen years of age, to all intents and purposes, her own mistress.

True, by her late father's will, dated two years before his death, three guardians had been appointed for her.

But now the first of these, the Rev. Mr. Goodwin, was a saint in heaven.

The second, Mrs. Susan Wesley, was a missionary in farther India.

The third and last, Mrs. Margaret Cavendish, was an infirm old lady, confined to her chamber, and fast falling into dotage.

The two last mentioned and surviving guardians, Mrs. Wesley and Mrs. Cavendish, while from their conditions they were unable to control the actions of the orphan heiress, yet, by their simple existence they stood between her and the Orphans' Court, that, in the event of their death, might have appointed other guardians not so acceptable to Miss Cavendish.

As it was, with only her doting grandmother to consult, the young lady had her own way in everything, even in assigning to Mrs. Grey the best suit of rooms in the house, the smartest ladies' maid on the premises, the finest pony in the stables, and a quarterly allowance that a billionaire would have shrunk from giving away.

In vain old Mr. Fergusson, the family solicitor, shook his rugged iron-gray head over this last piece of lavish generosity. He had no power to prevent it. He could only offer advice.

But, notwithstanding her handsome rooms and smart waiting-maid and fine pony and large income, and all the comforts and luxuries that surrounded her, and the love and respect that attended her, Mary Grey was miserable. Constant fear of detection oppressed her soul.

Mrs. Cavendish and Miss Cavendish noticed her unhappiness, and ascribed it all to grief for the loss of her betrothed husband. And they redoubled their efforts to soothe and comfort her.

The old lady, who believed that, next to Christian faith, steady occupation was the best cure for grief, often invited Mrs. Grey into her room to read with her, sing to her, or work with her at the pretty old-fashioned arts of tambouring, shagreening, tatting and so forth.

And the old lady's room was a very pleasant chamber, lighted by two lofty windows, that looked out upon the mountain ranges; warmed by a glowing hickory wood fire in the ample old-fashioned fireplace, which was furnished and adorned by high brass andirons and brass fender, both burnished bright as gold. Then there was a crimson carpet on the floor, crimson curtains to the old-time four-posted bedstead, crimson curtains to the tall windows, and crimson covers to the easy-chairs. And the old-style mahogany chest of drawers and clothes-press and cabinet were all waxed and polished till they shone like dark mirrors in the reflection of the fire flame.

Altogether it was a bright, warm, cheery chamber, where Emma liked to pass a great deal of her time, working with or reading to the old lady.

But, as for Mrs. Grey, she found it "slow" and dull, though she was too prudent to say so.

She had a weight upon her mind—that dread of detection I have mentioned, augmented now to terror, in the anticipation of Laura Lytton's visit at the Easter holidays.

She felt desperate enough at times to run away.

And then she could not forget Alden Lytton. With all the capacity of love she possessed in her selfish nature she loved the handsome young student. And she could not yet give him up, and renounce all hope of ever winning him back.

She was not only very unhappy, but she was very much bored at Blue Cliffs.

In the regularity of the household arrangements there was nothing to make her forget her troubles.

Their days were passed something like this:

They rose at seven o'clock in the morning, had family prayers in the old lady's room at half-past seven, when they always found her already up and dressed, and seated in her easy-chair by the blazing wood fire, and her room in perfect order.

After prayers they breakfasted in the small oak-paneled parlor next to the old lady's room.

After breakfast Emma would have her daily consultation with her housekeeper, and order the dinner and all other domestic matters for the day.

Then Emma, attended by old Jerome, would go out riding on horseback for an hour or two. She always invited Mrs. Grey to go with her. But the indolent beauty detested horseback riding, or any other exercise that called for the least exertion on her part.

Sometimes Emma drove out in a low basket-carriage, drawn by two pretty ponies, and of course always asked Mrs. Grey to accompany her. And if the roads were very good, and the weather very fine, the widow would accept the invitation.

They would return from the drive in time for luncheon.

After luncheon there was working and reading in the old lady's room until dinner time.

After dinner Mrs. Cavendish took a nap in her big arm-chair by the fire.

Mrs. Grey went to her room and slept two or three hours.

And Emma Cavendish read to herself. And her solitary reading at this time was very peculiar. It was all upon one subject—"The Future Life."

Ever since her father had passed away to the "Better Land," the "Spirit World," "Paradise," "Heaven"—whatever it might be called, wherever it might be sought—the future life and all concerning it possessed an all-absorbing interest for her mind. She searched the Scripture for indices of its nature. And she found in the Holy Word and among the writings of the most intelligent commen-

tators upon it, very much to enlighten and comfort her. Whereas before, all had been vague, now much seemed very real.

Thus two or three hours of every afternoon were passed by our young Emma.

Then came the reunion at the tea-table, which was always set in the old lady's room, when Emma awoke from her heavenly dream and the others from their natural sleep.

Soon after tea, old Mrs. Cavendish retired.

Then Emma went into the long dining-room, where she gathered all the household servants together, and also as many of the plantation hands as chose to attend, and she read to them for an hour or two from some entertaining or instructive book, ending the reading with a chapter from the Bible. This was also a time of much peaceful happiness to Emma, who knew that she was giving pleasure to these poor creatures, who looked forward through all their day of toil to these two hours of evening recreation.

Mrs. Grey took little or no part in all this. She hated the horseback rides in the morning over the rugged mountain paths, and the little sewing circle in the forenoon in the old lady's room, the afternoon readings, and, above all, the gathering of the servants in the old dining-room in the evening.

She avoided all this whenever she could decently do so.

She idled away much of her time in arranging and rearranging her magnificent wardrobe, and gloating over the splendid jewels, costly shawls and fine laces that were so many "testimonials" from friends and dupes who had wasted alike their affections and their means upon her, and in wondering how long it must be before she dared wear any of these "braveries." Especially there was a camel's-hair shawl, the last gift of Governor Cavendish to her, that made her eyes and heart ache, not with regret and sorrow for the loss of the generous giver, but from the wish to wear it and display it to admiring eyes.

Now she was doing penance in the heaviest and blackest bombazine and crape. And she felt sure that if she should remain at Blue Cliffs she must wear mourning for at least three years, or utterly forfeit the old lady's confidence and esteem.

If she should remain at Blue Cliffs for three years? Poor creature! She was scarcely sure of remaining there three days! Any day might bring a letter from Laura Lytton exposing all her depravity.

And in the utmost anxiety she looked from day to day to meet her doom. In a home like this she could not know an hour's happiness.

And yet she might have gained courage from the fact that, though every week brought letters from Laura Lytton to Emma Cavendish, in no letter was the name of Mary Grey even mentioned.

Once Mrs. Grey put this question plumply to Miss Cavendish:

"Does Miss Lytton know that I am staying here?"

"Yes, dear. I told her so in the first letter I wrote her after our arrival," answered Emma Cavendish.

"How is it, then, I wonder, that she never sends her love to me?"

"I don't know," answered Emma, hesitatingly.

"She never mentions me at all, I believe."

"No, dear."

"I think it very strange; don't you?"

Miss Cavendish hesitated. She did not wish to give pain by saying that Laura Lytton never liked Mary Grey. After a short pause and a repetition of the question by Mrs. Grey, she answered very gently:

"You know that you and Laura were never very intimate. I suppose that is the reason it does not occur to her to write of you."

"Maybe so," said Mrs. Grey, and the conversation stopped.

And now, besides all her other troubles and vexations,

the beauty was pining for the want of admiration, the coquette was dying for a flirtation. Since her fifteenth year she had lived on admiration and for flirtation.

Even at the well-ordered ladies' college of Mount Ascension she had managed to drive a four-in-hand flirtation with three grave professors and a minister of the gospel.

In the government house, in the city, she had feasted on admiration and reveled in flirtation.

And now here, for three months, she had been cooped up in an old country house with an aged woman, who was given up to her Bible and her prayer-book, her tambouring and shagreening, and a young lady who was devoted to reading visionary books about heaven and to "improving" ill-savored darkies on earth, and whose only recreation was a morning gallop over the mountains, or a pony drive through the forest.

Few visitors came to the house. And these were mostly ladies on calls of condolence. No gentlemen ever came, except Mr. Fergusson, and he only on business.

Mary Grey wondered if there were no marriageable or flirtable men in the neighborhood; she felt that she must flirt or die, and so hinted to Emma that she had better return a few of the calls that had been made on the family, to which Emma replied:

"When Lent is over, and Laura Lytton comes down to spend the Easter holidays with us, I shall go out and also receive company at home for her sake."

This answer was bitter-sweet to the widow; sweet in its promise of society, with all its possibilities of winning admiration, and getting up flirtations and so forth; but it was bitter in its reminder of Laura Lytton's impending visit and its dreaded exposures.

However, as this was only the second week in Lent, the Easter holidays were a full month off yet. She would watch the signs of the times in Emma's face and manner; and if she should discover any indications in either that Laura Lytton had given her a hint by letter of any reve-

lations to be made in person concerning herself, Mary Grey, then she could invent some excuse and leave the house before the storm should burst.

For this exigency she saved up all the money Emma gave her.

But, oh! it was dreary work trying to live at Blue Cliffs this dismal, thawing, sloppy, slushy season of early spring.

And what made the matter much worse was this: On the very first week of their arrival at Blue Cliffs there had come a sudden thaw and a great freshet, that had carried away the bridge across the Mad River, and the turnpike road between Blue Cliffs and Wendover, and cut off all direct communication between the two places.

The Cavendish family could not even get to their parish church at Wendover on Sunday, or even send to the post office to mail or receive letters, except by a route so circuitous that it took from morning till night to go and return.

But for the family there was no visiting or receiving visits, no shopping, no church-going. And to Mary Grey, who had no resources of occupation or amusement within herself, this life was like a purgatory.

CHAPTER XLV

A REAPPEARANCE

One day Emma came to her with beaming face.

"I bring you good news, Mrs. Grey. Our road commissioners are at work building the new bridge across Mad River this week. They expect to have it so far completed as to allow vehicles to pass over on Saturday next. So on Sunday, my dear, we may go to church. Are you not glad?"

And without waiting for an answer, Emma went out to tell her grandmother.

Yes, Mrs. Grey was very glad to be able to go to church. Not that she cared in the least for divine service, but she cared very much for displaying her beauty. She knew very well that whenever she should appear in any public place there would be a buzz of admiration. And she anticipated with much vanity the sensation she should create by appearing at the village church at Wendover.

This was Monday. And from this day to the end of the week Mary Grey was employed in studying, arranging, and rearranging the costume with which she intended to astonish and vanquish the natives at church on Sunday.

The Sabbath morning came; and the Cavendish carriage was drawn up before the door.

The family had breakfasted earlier than usual, and Emma Cavendish, in her plain, simple suit of black bombazine, with a crape hat and veil, stood waiting for the appearance of Mrs. Grey.

At length she sent a maid with a message to the widow to the effect that if she did not make haste they would be late.

Then Mrs. Grey came rustling downstairs. And Emma beheld her with astonishment.

Her whole costume was black, certainly, but it was a mere mockery of mourning. She wore a rich black corded silk dress and mantle, both trimmed with deep folds of black crape, beaded with a bright beading of bugles, which gleamed and glittered with every motion. A dainty, coquettish little black silk hat, also trimmed with crape and gleaming bugles, was perched rather jauntily upon the top of her hair, which was curled, frizzled and puffed in the last fashionable style. Tiny black boots and gloves, a snowy little cobweb of a pocket handkerchief, and a gem of a prayer-book, completed the outfit. She looked extremely pretty; there was no question of that. She made

a graceful apology for keeping Miss Cavendish waiting, and then followed her into the carriage.

Emma was surprised and pained, but soon began to make mental excuses for Mary Grey.

"She is very vain; there is no doubt of that. But then, she is also very pretty, and her beauty is all that she has; so it is no wonder that she should value it highly."

When they reached Wendover church, they found it already very much crowded. The opening prayer was being offered. They waited at the door until it was finished, and then they went up the aisle.

"The governor's pew," as it was called, was in the corner to the right of the chancel, and somewhat in the obscure light of a stained glass window. So it was not until Miss Cavendish had her hand upon the door that she perceived some one occupying a seat there.

The some one was a young man, who immediately arose, and, with a slight bow, would have passed out. But Miss Cavendish silently signed to him to resume his seat.

As this little scene was passing, Mary Grey turned pale and faint, and grasped the edge of the pew to keep from falling.

She thought the intruder was Alden Lytton.

However, with an effort she recovered herself, entered the pew, took her seat, and assumed the devout manner becoming the sacred place.

Then, stealing a glance at the stranger again, she perceived that he was not Alden Lytton, though he bore a startling resemblance to that handsome young student.

In the pauses of the service Emma Cavendish became conscious that there was another clergyman besides their pastor in the chancel.

And, when, at length, after the singing of the last hymn that concluded the morning service, Miss Cavendish raised her eyes, she perceived that a stranger had quietly entered the pulpit, and with his head bowed upon the Bible cushion, was silently praying.

A tall, fine-looking, venerable man he seemed, with a reverend white head and beard. And when at length he lifted his head, Miss Cavendish discovered that he was no stranger, and recognized the Rev. Dr. Jones, who had brought Electra to Mount Ascension.

He gave out his text and preached with much earnestness and eloquence and was listened to with attention and reverence.

At the end of the sermon he pronounced the benediction with much feeling.

While the congregation was leaving the church, the young man who had come unbidden into the Cavendish pew arose and stood before Miss Cavendish, and respectfully apologized for his intrusion, explaining that the crowded state of the church, and his belief that the family from Blue Cliffs would not attend divine service that day, had induced him to seat himself in their pew.

Emma replied pleasantly that there was plenty of room in the pew, and that he was very welcome then, or at any other time, to occupy a seat in it.

Then Emma turned to the widow, who stood staring at the young man, and said:

"Mrs. Grey, permit me to present to you Mr. Craven Kyte, of Wendover, once a ward of my father."

Mr. Kyte bowed very low and fixed a look of involuntary and unbounded admiration on the face of the beauty.

She held out her dainty hand and smiled on him deliciously, as she murmured:

"I am very happy to know the ward of my dear and honored friend now in heaven." And she, too, bowed gracefully. And when she raised her eyes again, she saw that she had smitten this young victim also to the heart.

"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you to your carriage, Miss Cavendish?" inquired the young man.

"With thanks," answered Emma.

And Craven Kyte attended the two ladies down the aisle and out from the church, and handed them into the coach.

He seated Mrs. Grey first. And as he relinquished her hand, she fired from her dark eyes another arrow that quivered in his heart.

"We should be very glad to see you at the hall, Mr. Kyte. I hope you will feel at liberty to come to us as often as you used to do when your guardian, my dear father, was with us."

"I thank you very much, Miss Cavendish. I was really anxious to come, but fearful of intruding. I shall avail myself of your leave and come with much pleasure now," answered the young man, modestly and respectfully, as he bowed and closed the carriage door.

The horse started; Mrs. Grey lolled back in her seat and mused.

"Here is a godsend!" she had the impiety to say to herself; "a splendid young man, the very image of Alden Lytton without Alden Lytton's intolerable priggishness. And the ward of the late Governor Cavendish, too, and with the freedom of Blue Cliffs."

No doubt she thought he would be a frequent visitor. And, oh! what a fine time she would have with him! What a glorious flirtation she would get up!

She could easily blind the eyes of two such simple women as old Mrs. Cavendish and Emma, and flirt with the handsome fellow to her heart's content.

And perhaps this might go further than flirtation—if he should be wealthy enough to make it worth her while.

And then she wondered if he were wealthy. As the ward of the late Governor Cavendish, he must of course have had some property, else he would not have had such a prominent man for a guardian. If he should be wealthy, the proposed flirtation should proceed much further, even to matrimony. To be sure, he might already be engaged to some one else. But that circumstance would not trouble her at all. She had come between other couples and broken their betrothal only for the gratification of her own vanity. And she certainly would not hesitate to do the

same thing now, especially if she meant serious business.

True, her proceeding to such extremities might—indeed would—shock old Mrs. Cavendish and Emma. But if she could secure a handsome and wealthy young man for a husband, she could afford to alienate them.

So the first mile or two of the ride homeward was passed in silence, until Mrs. Grey, longing for some more definite information about her intended victim, exclaimed:

"Emma, my dear, what on earth are you thinking about? You have not opened your mouth once since we started."

"I was thinking of the sermon we have heard. It was an unusually fine one," answered the young lady.

"What an intolerable prig this girl is, to be sure," said Mrs. Grey to herself; but to Emma she observed:

"Yes, I was very deeply impressed by it. So also was that interesting young friend of yours, Mr.—er—er——"

"Kyte," said Emma.

"Oh, yes, Kyte—Mr. Kyte. Who is he?"

"He was a ward of my father."

"So you told me; but that gives little information, my dear. In the words of the immortal some one:

" 'Who was his father?
Who was his mother?
Has he a sister?
Has he a brother?' "

"I suppose his father and mother must have been a Mr. and Mrs. Kyte, though I never heard of either of them, or if they had other children who were his sisters and brothers," answered Emma, smiling.

"That's queer, too! Does he never talk of his parents?"

"He does not remember them, I presume. I believe he was my father's ward from his earliest childhood. I know that when I could first notice and remember, he was a lad of about eight or nine years old."

"Was there much property?"

"Property! Indeed, I don't know. I never once thought of that."

"Was he brought up in your father's house?"

"Yes, until he was sent to school."

"Hem! How very much like the Lyttons he looks. Don't you think so?"

"There is a superficial resemblance. But Alden Lytton has a much finer, more intellectual and spiritual face than Craven Kyte."

"Is there any relationship between them?"

"Not the slightest, I believe. The resemblance is altogether accidental."

"Is the young man married?"

"Married? Why, no!" replied Emma, lifting her brows.

"Is he engaged then?"

"In business? Yes."

"I don't mean that. I mean, is he engaged to be married?"

"My dear Mrs. Grey, you are surely interviewing me for some enterprising paper," laughed Emma.

"I beg your pardon. I have been asking a good many questions, sure enough. But then, my dear Emma, we have been secluded so long that everything is news to me. You need not answer if you don't like," said Mrs. Grey, pouting a little.

"Oh, I have no objection to answer. I was but jesting, my dear friend. Let me see. What was it you asked me? Whether he was engaged? Yes, my dear, he is engaged; to a very fine girl, a bright, brave girl—Mabel Taylor of the Perch Point lighthouse. He made my father acquainted with that engagement a year ago," answered Emma.

And Mrs. Grey asked no more questions. She did not at all regret the circumstance of her intended victim's engagement. It rather added piquancy to her pursuit of

him. It was pleasant to conquer a new admirer; but it was delightful to supplant another woman.

The carriage rolled into the avenue leading up to the front of Blue Cliff Hall, and soon drew up before the door.

The two ladies alighted and went in.

"Let us go up to grandma's room and tell her whom we saw at chuch, who preached, and all about it, as she would say," Emma proposed, as they laid off their hats on the hall table.

And they went upstairs and entered the old lady's room, and drew chairs and seated themselves at her fire.

"Well, my dears, and did you get to church in time?" inquired Mrs. Cavendish.

"Not in very good time, grandma. The first prayer was nearly over."

"Ah, that was a pity. What was the text?"

"'God is love.' That was the text. But a stranger occupied our pulpit this morning, grandma. And it must have been known beforehand to others, though not to us; fo the church was crowded—crammed."

"A stranger! It is very seldom a stranger preaches in our church. Who was he, my dear?"

"The Rev. Dr. Jones."

"Jones? Jones? Jones is a very common name. Did you hear any other, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Cavendish, with more curiosity and interest than Emma could account for.

"Yes, a very uncommon one, grandma. I heard one of the old vestrymen speak of him as Dr. Beresford Jones."

Emma was struck dumb by the effect these words had upon the old lady.

"So he has come back after all these long years!" she murmured, in a low tone, as she clasped her hands and closed her eyes, and sank back in her chair.

"Grandma!" cried Emma, in alarm, after watching her

for a few moments in silence, and seeing that she did not move.

"Don't speak to me yet a while, dear. Give me a little camphor," murmured the old lady, in a tone so low as to be almost inaudible.

Emma went to a Japan cabinet, took from it a small cut-glass vial, from which she poured a little camphor cordial into a tiny wineglass, which she brought to the old lady, who took it with trembling hand and slowly sipped it.

"Do you feel better now, dear grandma?" inquired Emma, as she took the empty glass from the old lady's hand.

"I was not feeling ill, my dear; only you brought me unexpected news," replied Mrs. Cavendish.

Still Emma looked in some uneasiness at the pale, trembling, fragile old lady before her.

"There, my dear, do you and Mary go now and get ready for your dinner. I have had mine. There, leave me to myself. I suppose that man will be coming here to-morrow, and I must be prepared to meet him. Go, now."

Emma Cavendish and Mary Grey left the room together.

When they had closed the door and found themselves in the passage outside, they turned and looked at each other in silent astonishment. But Miss Cavendish would not, and Mrs. Grey durst not make any comment on what they had witnessed.

They saw no more of the old lady until they were called to tea, which was always served in her room. They found her looking paler than usual, and during the meal they noticed that she spoke but very little, and when she did her voice trembled, as her hands also did when she moved them.

And after tea she dismissed the two young women earlier than usual.

On going down into the drawing-room, Miss Cavendish

found that the evening duties of the hall footman had not been attended to.

The window shutters were not closed, the lamps were not lighted, nor the fire replenished.

In some surprise at all this unwonted neglect, she put forth her hand and rang the bell.

A little negro answered it.

"Where is Jerome, and why has he not seen to these rooms?" inquired the young lady.

"Please'm, Uncle 'Rome's gone to Wenober to carry a letter for de old mist'ess. He had to go off in a hurry 'fore ever he could fas'en up de house," said the boy, pulling at his woolly forelocks and bobbing his head by way of respectful obeisance.

"Go and tell Peter to come and attend to Jerome's duties then," said Miss Cavendish.

The ebony lad pulled his wool, bobbed his head and backed out.

Emma stood in the dusk before the smoldering fire in a thoughtful attitude, until the second footman came in and closed the windows and lighted the lamps.

Then in the glare of light she turned and met the eyes of Mrs. Grey fixed upon her with a surprised and inquiring expression.

But Emma merely took up a book and sat down to read.

CHAPTER XLVI

FORGIVEN

THE next morning Mrs. Grey and Miss Cavendish went to the old lady's room as usual, for morning prayers.

They found her up and dressed with unusual care, as if to receive a visitor; but she seemed not to have been

rested or refreshed by her night's sleep; she was even paler and more tremulous than on the preceding evening.

And instead of conducting the service herself, as she usually did, she turned over that duty to her granddaughter.

As soon as prayers were over she dismissed her two companions to their breakfast, telling them that she wished to be alone all the morning, and that she would send for them when she should be able to receive them.

Emma Cavendish and Mary Grey went away much mystified.

On their way down they met old Jerome, with a letter in his hand.

"Whom is that for?" inquired Miss Cavendish.

"For de old madam. It was so late when I fotch it, which I was kept so long a waitin' for it at Wen'over, as I didn't like to wake up de fam'ly at that onlawful hour of the night; so I jes' kep' it till this morning to fetch up to de madam."

And with this explanation the old negro passed upstairs, on his way to the old lady's room.

The two young women went down to the breakfast room in silence.

The day was very bright and beautiful. And the morning sunshine, streaming through the windows between the heavy folds of the rich crimson damask curtains, struck sparks of fire from the silver service on the table as they sat down.

Both felt that something unusual was about to happen —Emma with painful interest; Mary Grey with acute, intolerable curiosity.

And something rather unusual for that house did happen.

They had scarcely finished breakfast, and were still loitering over their chocolate, when the sound of wheels was heard on the avenue leading up to the house.

Emma Cavendish raised her head and listened, but did not leave her seat.

Mary Grey got up and went to the window and looked between the folds of the crimson curtains.

A rather shabby little closed carriage, which Mrs. Grey recognized as being the one "hack" of the "Reindeer" at Wendover, drew up before the house. The door opened, and a tall, gray-haired, most venerable-looking man, clothed in clerical black, whom Mrs. Grey immediately recognized as the officiating minister at the Wendover church on the day before, alighted and came up the steps.

Apparently he was expected, and seen by some one in the hall, for he was immediately admitted without knocking.

"It is the clergyman who preached yesterday," said Mrs. Grey, turning to Emma Cavendish and volunteering the information.

"The Rev. Dr. Jones. Yes; we both heard grandma say that she expected him. I suppose they were old acquaintances," calmly replied Miss Cavendish.

"She was very much disturbed when she heard of his being in this neighborhood, don't you think so?" inquired Mrs. Grey, taking courage to chatter.

"My grandmother is very infirm. It does not take much to upset her," answered Miss Cavendish, coldly.

"Yes; but I think she was more agitated by the arrival of this stranger at Wendover than she was by the death of her only son," persisted Mary Grey.

Emma Cavendish made no reply.

"And oh—by the way—the Rev. Dr. Jones! Why, that is the very same name of the old gentleman who brought Electra—Electra Nobody—to Mount Ascension in such a strange, sudden manner! I did not see him then myself, so I cannot tell if this is the same man, but I know that he bears the very same name.

"A very common name," observed Miss Cavendish.

"My dear, Jones is a very common name; but is the

Rev. Dr. Jones so very common? And Mrs. St. John described her strange visitor as a tall, gray-haired, venerable-looking man. And this gentleman answers the description. And bears the same name. I think he must be the same man. What do you think?"

To this direct question Emma Cavendish answered quietly and coldly:

"He is the same man. I saw him at Mount Ascension, and recognized him in the pulpit yesterday."

"Oh, indeed! And he is an old friend of Mrs. Cavendish. But old as he is, he is young enough to be her son. I wonder if the old lady knows anything about his strange ward, Electra—Electra Nobody?" inquired Mary Grey, with intense curiosity.

"I do not know. And, Mrs. Grey, I think we had best drop my grandmother's name out of this discussion," said Miss Cavendish, pointedly, as she touched the bell and arose from her seat.

Mary Grey shrugged her shoulders and picked up a book, which she opened and pretended to read.

After a little she withdrew from the room.

Emma Cavendish went through her morning's domestic duties; but after that she did not, according to her usual custom, order her saddle horse or her pony chaise for her morning ride or drive.

Her grandmother had a visitor, and her own presence might possibly be required, she thought.

So she remained indoors, waiting for the visitor to depart.

She waited a long time.

The forenoon passed slowly away, and still the strange guest remained shut up in the old lady's room.

Emma looked out to see if the carriage that had brought him was still waiting. And as she looked she saw old Jerome come out of the house and speak to the coachman, and the coachman gather his reins and drive around in the direction of the stables.

The carriage and horses were to be put up then, she perceived. The visitor was going to stay to dinner. Now she certainly expected a summons to her grandmother's room. But no summons came.

At noon the old lady's bell rang. Jerome answered it. Emma met him as he came down the stairs, confidently expecting a message from her grandmother.

"Well, Jerome," she said, "am I wanted?"

"No, miss. The old madam have ordered luncheon to be carried up to her room for herself and the old parson."

"Well, Jerome, I will go and see that a nice one is prepared," said Miss Cavendish.

And she went in search of the housekeeper, and soon sent up a repast fit for a bishop.

The afternoon waned, and still the visitor lingered.

The sun went down. Twilight deepened into darkness. Jerome came in and closed the shutters and lighted the lamps.

And just as he lighted the last one and filled the room with a glare of light, the sound of wheels was heard again approaching the house.

"See who that is, Jerome," said Miss Cavendish, nervously.

"I know what it is, miss. It is the carriage coming around for the parson, miss," said the man.

"Oh," breathed Miss Cavendish, with a sigh of relief. Somehow she was glad he was going.

Meanwhile where was Mary Grey all this time?

I will tell you.

Adjoining the old lady's room was a wainscoted parlor, that was sometimes used for a breakfast-room. A half-glazed sash door or window door communicated between the two rooms. But this door was usually closed and locked, and a thin white muslin curtain was drawn before its half-window.

Mary Grey, with cat-like stealthiness, had been prowling about the halls and passages around the old lady's

room, seeking to find out the secret of the parson's strange visit, and stealing away whenever she heard the bell ring or a footstep approach.

At dusk she heard the bell ring for the third time since the door had closed upon the visitor. And she slipped into the wainscoted parlor to avoid detection. The room was now pitch dark.

She waited with a palpitating heart until she heard the approach of old Jerome.

He entered the old lady's room. And in a moment after that room was lighted up. And the light shone through the thin muslin curtained window of the communicating door into the dark room where Mary Grey had hidden herself to watch and listen.

This was the chance she had waited for all day. She crept to the door leading into the passage, and softly turned the key to prevent intrusion. Then she slipped off her shoes, and crept to the window in the communicating door.

And there, hidden in darkness herself, she peeped into the lighted room, and saw and heard all that passed in the few more minutes that the strange visitor remained. It was the leave-taking, but such a strange one!

The old man knelt at the aged lady's feet. And her venerable hands were extended over his bowed head in solemn benediction.

"Forgiven at last, my mother!" he said, in a voice shaking with intense emotion.

"Forgiven and blessed, my son! my son!" she answered, while her tears fell fast upon him.

"I have lived to receive this," he said, as he arose to his feet.

"I have lived beyond the natural term of human life to give you this," she sighed.

And then she put out her aged and trembling hand and drew him to her heart.

And the next moment he was gone.

Mary Grey remained rooted to the spot with amazement.

Breathless with surprise at having scented a mystery, and baffled in curiosity by having heard just so much and no more, Mary Grey stood yet a few moments longer in the dark room, listening intently.

Then, when she thought the mysterious visitor quite gone, she cautiously felt her way to the door leading into the passage, and softly unlocked and opened it.

The instant she did so, she stood in the full light of the hall, confronted with the Rev. Dr. Jones!

"So you have been eavesdropping!" he said, sternly.

She stood as one petrified. She could not even scream.

He took her hand, and led her back into the dark room, and closed the door. Then he drew her away to the end of the room the most distant from the old lady's apartment, and repeated his charge:

"So you have been abusing the confidence of the family that protect and trust you by playing the spy to discover their secrets!"

"I—I thought you were gone!" she stammered incoherently.

"No. I am here. I heard a suppressed or half-suppressed breathing and moving close to the door between this and the other room as I passed to go out. I knew then that there was an eavesdropper lurking there, whom it was my duty to discover. I tried the passage door of this room, and found it locked. Then I went downstairs noisily and came back silently. I waited at the door until the eavesdropper should come forth. But I certainly did not expect to see you."

"I—I don't know you at all!" she gasped, in terror, for she had far less courage than duplicity.

"No, you don't know me at all; or at least you don't know anything more of me than that I am called the Rev. Dr. Jones. But, mark me! I know you!" he said, with emphasis.

She could scarcely suppress a scream.

"Yes, notwithstanding the changed color of your hair, I know you well. Your hair was golden when I saw it first, and made a strange contrast with your deep dark eyes. Now it is raven black."

"You—you are mistaken. You take me for some one else!" she faltered, trembling all over.

He laughed slightly, and shook his head.

"Whom do you take me for?" she now ventured to ask.

He stooped and whispered a word, at which she started and recoiled.

"So you see that I know you quite well," he said, composedly.

"You do not!" she burst forth, in eager yet suppressed tones. "I am not the girl for whom you take me. And that is not my name."

"No? Then your name, like the color of your hair, has been changed, that is all."

"I never bore the name you called me by. My maiden name was Ross. I changed it legitimately when I married Mr. Grey," she answered, in a tone of suppressed fury.

"So—so—so," slowly muttered the minister. "You are that widow Grey who was to marry my—to marry Governor Cavendish when his death put an end to your plans!"

"I was engaged to Mr. Cavendish. He knew me well. He loved and esteemed me. And he had every reason to do so."

"Had he? And so you successfully imposed yourself upon an honorable household under an assumed name and character, and with a design upon the hand and fortune of the widowed master of the house?"

"You are a wretch to talk to me so! I don't know who you are. But I know you want to injure, yes, to ruin me!" she burst forth, in passionate, yet half-suppressed tones.

"Do not be alarmed. I shall not expose you to this

family. Death frustrated your designs upon the governor. And really I think it was infinitely better for all concerned that he should have died, than that he should have married you. But that misfortune having been prevented, I do not see that you can do any more mischief here. There are no more men here to be drawn down to their destruction. So, as your being here in this pure home may really keep you out of sin, I shall leave you here in peace, at least for the present. But do not let me find you out in eavesdropping again," he said.

And then he turned and left her so suddenly that he was gone before she knew that he was going.

Then she doubled and shook both her little fists after him as she ground her teeth with impotent rage. And then she slipped out and flew up into her own room, where she relieved her feelings with a burst of hysterical weeping.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE SECRET REVEALED

At this same hour old Mrs. Cavendish sat meditating in her armchair by the fireside of her chamber. She had sat thus since her strange visitor had left the room. She heard nothing of the singular scene going on in the extremity of the adjoining room. Neither did she hear him, when he went softly down the stairs the second time.

But she heard his carriage wheels roll away on the hard gravel of the drive, and then she put her hand to the bell rope and pulled it.

Jerome answered the summons.

"Go and ask Miss Cavendish to come to me," said the old lady.

The servant bowed and went out.

In a few minutes Emma Cavendish came into the room.

She came up to the old lady and kissed her, and then she sat down on a stool beside the armchair, and slipped her hand in that of her grandmother.

"You know that I have had a visitor with me all day, Emma?" the old lady commenced.

"Yes, grandmother."

"Do you know who he was?"

"The Rev. Dr. Jones, grandma."

"And who is he besides being Dr. Jones? Do you know, dear?"

"No, ma'am."

"Emma, he is my eldest son."

The girl looked up at the old lady in blank amazement.

"You look astonished. But did you not know, my child—had you never heard that I was a widow when I married your grandfather, General Cameron Cavendish?" inquired the old lady.

"Yes, ma'am, I had heard it; but it seemed so very, very long ago, I never thought about it at all. It always seemed to me as if you had never been any other than I had always known you, my grandmother, Mrs. Cavendish," said the young lady.

"And you never heard, perhaps, that I had a son by the first marriage?"

"Never!" exclaimed Emma, with no abatement of her surprise.

"Yes, my child. I had not only been a wife, but a mother, as well as a widow, for years before I ever saw your grandfather."

"Will you tell me all about it, dear grandma?"

"I sent for you for that purpose, my child. So now you must hear a little bit of strange family history."

"It will interest me, dear grandma."

"It is a tale of old times, child."

"Well, dear, you know I was born a Lorimer, of Loudoun County; and that, like you, I was an only daughter, though not, like you, an heiress."

"Yes, ma'am."

"I had several brothers. My portion would be but small. It was for that reason my parents wished me to make a wealthy marriage. I was young; I had no preferences, and therefore I obeyed them and accepted the offer of Mr. Beresford Jones, of the Beresford Manors. He was old enough to have been my own grandfather. He was sixty. I was just only seventeen."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Emma.

"Yes, my child. But he made me a right good husband. And I honored him for his wisdom and loved him for his goodness. And our marriage was a right down comfortable and happy one. That is one reason, my dear, why I so easily understood the attachment between your dear father and pretty little Mary Grey, you know."

"Yes, grandma."

"Well, Emma, the happy marriage did not last very long. Four years afterward Mr. Beresford Jones died, leaving me a young widow, with an only child, a son three years old. He had made a will bequeating the whole of his property to me and my son, share and share alike, unconditionally, and making me the trustee of the estate and the guardian of the heir."

"That was a great responsibility for one so young, grandma."

"Yes, my dear, it was. But I remained at Beresford Manors, taking care of the estate and looking after the education of my boy, for whom I had engaged a competent tutor. All my social pleasures then consisted in visiting and receiving visits from my country neighbors, occasionally shopping in the village, and weekly attendance at church."

"A quiet life, grandma."

"A very quiet life, my dear; and so it might have continued to be for many years, and perhaps up to this very time, had I not, one day at a dinner party, met Cameron Cavendish, then a very handsome young colonel of cav-

alry. My dear, I think we took a liking to each other at first sight; I do, indeed. Well, my darling, I will not dwell upon that old love story, but tell you at once, that, after an acquaintance of only five weeks, we were married. Our marriage was certainly a very hasty one."

"But if family traditions are true, it was a very happy one," said Emma.

"A very happy one, my dear child. In the twenty-five years we lived together, there was never a cloud overshadowed our heaven of love. He even took my son into his heart, and loved him as his own child. One year after our marriage I was so happy as to place in his arms a boy of his own, my second son, Charles Cavendish, your father. We had several other children, dear Emma, but all except Charles and Susan—your Aunt Wesley—were taken to heaven."

"And therefore you have not lost them, but they are waiting for you there!" said Emma, sweetly and solemnly.

"Yes; waiting for me there!" echoed the old lady. And she fell into a reverie, which continued until Emma said:

"Go on and tell me more, dear grandma."

"Ah, yes. Well, the girl was ten years younger than the youngest boy, you know, and so they had nothing to do with her. They, the boys, were nearer of an age. Beresford was four years older than Charles, but Charles was the brighter of the two. So they studied under the same tutor at home, and afterward entered college together."

The old lady paused for breath.

And Emma already suspected a preference in the mother's heart for the son of the second and the love marriage over the son of the first and conventional union. But of course she gave no expression to this thought.

Mrs. Cavendish resumed:

"Beresford had very early displayed much self-will and insubordination. I had hopes that college discipline would have corrected that; but, bless you, child, that was because I knew nothing about college life, and the wide latitude it

affords young men. He grew worse at college, and spent no end of money. And then at last came the heaviest blow that ever fell upon my head."

The old lady paused, dropped her face upon her hands, and even after this great length of time wept over these early sorrows.

Emma tenderly caressed her.

At length she continued:

"My child, he, my son Beresford, fell in love with the daughter of his washerwoman! He did, indeed, my dear."

The old lady paused, and looked at Emma for sympathy. But the young girl only pressed her hand in silence.

"And he even wrote to me and told me all about her, and asked my leave to marry her! What do you think of that?"

"I think he was frank and straightforward and honorable in what he did, my dear grandma," said the young lady, bravely and truly.

"You do! You, the daughter of an old and noble house! I am astonished—yes, amazed—yes, shocked at you, Emma Cavendish! But as for me, I think, nay, I know that he was very foolish, reckless, and even impudent in proposing to me a low-born girl as a daughter-in-law," said the old lady, bridling.

" 'Is not this the son of Joseph the carpenter?' " murmured Emma, reverently, to herself.

"What are you muttering about?" querulously inquired the old lady.

"Only quoting a text of Scripture, dear grandma."

"What's that to do with what we are talking about?—not but what I have the greatest respect for the Scripture. And I am very glad that you can quote it, Emma. But, as I was saying, my dear, I considered it very foolish, reckless and impudent in my son to propose to me the daughter of his washerwoman as my daughter-in-law! I wrote to him and told him just that much."

"And then, dear grandma?"

"Then he wrote back to me, saying that he loved the girl—really loved her, you know—and had won her love, and that he was in honor bound to her. That he should await my consent with prayers for it, and with patience, until he should be twenty-one. The inference was that then he should marry her. What do you think of that?"

"I think, dear grandma, that he might have been really bound to her in honor."

"Bound to her in honor? I would like to know how he, my own minor son, could have been bound to her in honor, while he was still bound to me in obedience?"

"I can conceive that he might have been, though I cannot explain how," answered Emma, frankly.

"No, I don't suppose you can. Well, I wrote and told him that after he should have married the washerwoman's daughter, whether that should be in his twentieth, twenty-first, or a hundred and twenty-first year, he must never think of presenting himself to me again; that I gave him his choice now between me and the low-born girl he dreamed of marrying; that his choice, once made, must be irrevocable."

"And then, dear grandma?"

"He wrote to me saying that he could never choose between two whom he loved—'two' whom he loved! coupling me, a gentlewoman born, with that low creature!—and that he should always love both—'both,' and he should never desert either—'either,' putting me again on the level with her. Now, what do you think of that, my dear?"

Emma was silent.

"I ask you what you think of that?" persisted the old lady, fixing her eyes firmly upon the face of the young girl.

"Dear grandma, was her humble origin the only fault you had to find with my uncle's love?"

"The only fault? Why, that fault included all others—poverty, ignorance, vulgarity. Don't tell me!"

"Dear grandma——"

"Hold your tongue, Emma! It was quite objection enough that she was the daughter of the college laundress."

"Dear grandma, the God-man, the Divine-Human was the son of a carpenter, and the companion of poor fishermen," said Emma, with feeling.

"What's that got to do with it? Order ought to be observed in this world, and the boundaries of rank kept unbroken! King Coephatus marrying the beggar maid is all very well in rhyme, but it never would do in reason, that I can tell you!" said the unconverted old aristocrat, nodding her head.

Emma smiled, and then said:

"Go on, dear grandma, and tell me what happened next."

"What happened next, dear child, was that he continued to write to me as if there had been no dispute between us, until his birthday came, the day he was twenty-one years old, and would enter into possession of his estate. I had written to him to be home on that day, so that certain forms might be properly observed in transferring the trust of the estate from the guardian to the heir; and also that we should fitly celebrate the coming of age of my eldest son."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, he came; but not alone. I received word that morning that my son was in the drawing-room, waiting to see me. I went down, impatient to embrace him, and also to reason with him on his improper engagement, which I half hoped he had forgotten. Now, Emma, just fancy my astonishment when, after he had kissed me, and expressed all sorts of kind hopes about my being in good health, and so forth, he turned around and brought out of a shady corner, where she had sat concealed, a little, insignificant looking creature, and presented her to me, saying:

" 'Dear mother, will you not speak to my wife, and welcome her as your daughter?' "

"He was married, then?" said Emma, in surprise.

"He was married! And he had actually brought his wife home to me, with the insane idea that if I once beheld her, I should fall down and worship her, as he had done."

"Was she pretty?"

"Oh, yes, she was pretty—very pretty, but not at all ladylike! In the one minute that I stood there, petrified with amazement, I saw that. She was very small and very dark, with the blackest eyes and reddest cheeks and whitest teeth I had ever seen. She was quite foreign looking, and I afterward heard that both her parents were Italians, though she was native born. Well, my dear, as I said before, I stood there rooted to the ground with astonishment for a minute. And then, when I recovered my senses, I just waved my hand to them, and turned and left the room without one word."

"Oh, grandma!"

"Yes, I did, for I felt insulted in my own house and by my own son! Even now that all is forgiven, I cannot think of this without indignation. I went to my room, and sent word down to my son that I could not receive his wife. Upon which he took her away in the 'Reindeer' hack in which they had come to the house. And they returned to Wendover, and staid at the 'Reindeer' until all the legal formalities attending his majority were gone through. Then he took her to Beresford Manors. And I never saw my son again until to-day."

CHAPTER XLVIII

A DISCOVERY

"Oh, Heaven, grandma!" said Emma, bowing her head upon her hands in sorrow, and almost in shame at the hardness of this ancient lady.

"No, my dear, I never saw his face again until to-day. He was twenty-one when he left me. He is sixty-two now. A period of more than forty years has elapsed."

Emma's head sank lower. She had no answer in words for all this.

"But I heard flying rumors of his fortunes and misfortunes all the time. I heard that he lived unhappily with his gypsy-looking wife; that all his children died in childhood, one after the other, except his eldest child, a girl, who grew up to be the image of her mother, and to torment him, as his plebeian wife had done, and as he had also tormented me. When she was fifteen years of age, she ran off and married her own Italian music master."

"Shocking!" muttered Emma.

"The fellow was a vulgar fortune-hunter. He met her at the city boarding-school, where she was receiving her education. He expected to get some of her father's money. Of course he was disappointed. Beresford Jones would have nothing to say either to the undutiful daughter or to the unworthy son-in-law. He renounced both."

"And yet he himself had erred in the very same way," exclaimed Emma.

"Yes, and he had received the very same punishment. The only difference, or, rather, the greatest difference, was this: he had a large fortune of his own to fall back upon, and so could defy his parents. His daughter had nothing at all of her own but a few jewels, which her worthless husband soon converted into money, and squandered at the gambling houses."

"All this is very painful, dear grandma," murmured the old lady's young listener.

"Yes, but not so terrible as what followed. The abandoned fellow sank from bad to worse, and brought his young wife to the bitterest poverty. They both died of cholera, in extreme destitution, in the city of New York, leaving one child, an infant daughter."

Emma started slightly, and bent nearer to listen more intently.

"For many years this poor child lived among the most wretched of the city paupers, and in total ignorance of her parentage."

"Oh, how unspeakably sorrowful!" muttered Emma Cavendish.

"In the meantime," continued the old lady, "many vicissitudes had attended Beresford Jones and his family. His children, as I said, had all gone. His wife died. His heart was almost broken. He left Beresford Manors, and traveled all over the world in search of the peace he could never find.

"Did he ever find his grandchild?" inquired Emma, in breathless impatience.

"You shall hear. At length he took holy orders, and entered the ministry. Suffering had prepared him for the work. He became a city missionary in New York. Soon after that, gold was accidentally discovered in the mountains of Beresford Manors, and he became fabulously wealthy."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes, my dear; but what was wealth to him, who had neither son nor daughter to inherit it?"

"To him, a missionary among the poor, I should think wealth would be a great deal, for good uses," said Emma, brightening.

"Well, in that respect it was much. He used it freely among the poor, until at length accident discovered to him the existence of his granddaughter."

"Ah!" exclaimed the young listener, drawing nearer.

"He had searched for his lost daughter through all the principal cities of the Union, and he had advertised for her in all the principal newspapers, but all in vain. Of the existence of his granddaughter he had not even the faintest suspicion until, in his capacity of city missionary, he one day attended a school examination on Randall's Island."

"Oh!" gasped Emma, clasping her hands in breathless eagerness. "Oh, do go on! He saw her there?"

"The brightest pupil in the highest class struck him at first sight with an electric thrill. It seemed to him, as he told me to-day, that the love of his youth stood resuscitated before him. Yet he knew that this child could not even be his lost daughter, who was, or had been, the *facsimile* of her mother. Who was she then? That remarkable face, so unique, so piquant, so sparkling and electric, could not belong to any other race than that of his gypsy wife."

"Electra! Electra!" murmured Emma to herself.

"Well, my dear child, to make a long story short, he instituted cautious inquiries, which resulted in undoubted conviction that this girl was the child of his lost daughter. Within a week he removed her from Randall's Island and placed her at Mount Ascension, where you were then at school, Emma. Do you remember her—Electra?"

"Of course I do, dear grandma. She was one of my greatest favorites. She was with me last Christmas, at the government house!" exclaimed Emma, eagerly.

"Ah, was she? One of your Christmas circle of schoolmates that I heard you talking about?"

"Yes, dear grandma, she was there with Laura Lytton and Mrs. Grey."

"Indeed, dear! Well, to go on: Beresford, after putting the child to school, went immediately to Europe on business connected with the Philanthropic Emigration Society. He has just returned. A fancy to visit the scenes of his boyhood brought him to Wendover for a few days. Being

there on Sunday, he was invited to fill the pulpit of the parish church. You saw him there, and told me. The same evening I sent him a note by old Jerome, asking him to come and see me. He has been with me all day, as you know. Now he has gone to Wendover. To-morrow he will set out for Mount Ascension. And, Emma, I have invited him to come back, and bring Electra to spend the Easter holidays with us here. I hope the plan will be agreeable to you."

"Entirely so, my dear grandma. You know I expected Laura Lytton, also."

"Then, my dear, write to Mrs. St. John for me, and ask her to send both Electra and Laura Lytton here under the protection of Rev. Dr. Jones. When he comes again, dear child, you shall be introduced to your uncle. I should like to have called you in and presented you to him to-day, but this was scarcely the proper time or occasion to do so; and, besides, we had so much to say to each other."

"Of course you must have had, dear grandmother; and besides, it was much better to have told me this family history first, so as to prepare me to meet him."

"So I thought," agreed the old lady.

"But, grandma, there was one eccentric circumstance about his introduction of Electra into the school. He gave her no other name but Electra—no surname whatever. It was very odd. And it was awkward for us to introduce her to any one as 'Miss Electra.' 'Electra whom?' would be the natural inquiry, whether it were spoken or not. I hope my uncle will change all that."

"Her father's name was Paolo Coroni. But he does not like to call her by it, and he will not call her by any other. However, we must give her her full name now."

"How came she by her heathenish name, Electra?" inquired Miss Cavendish.

"It was her mother's name before her. Beresford called his own daughter Electra, because the name was so char-

acteristic of the girl's peculiar personality; and he chose to call his granddaughter the same."

"You will like Electra when you see her, grandmother."

"Yes. Now, go, my dear; I want to take a nap in my chair."

Miss Cavendish kissed the old lady, and left the room.

In the parlor below she found Mrs. Grey, who had in some measure recovered her equanimity.

But the young lady entirely upset the widow's nervous system by pleasantly exclaiming:

"We are to have Laura Lytton and Electra here at Easter, Mrs. Grey. And as the Rev. Dr. Jones is also coming, I think grandma may be induced to invite Alden Lytton here to meet his sister. It will make a very pleasant party. I hope you will enjoy it."

CHAPTER XLIX

THE WANDERER'S RETURN

But not long did Mary Grey give way to despondency. Most probably, she reasoned, Alden Lytton, in the true nobility of his soul, had forborne to expose her turpitude to his sister Laura, whom he had stated to be ignorant even of the relations between himself and the widow.

So Mary Grey said to herself that she would not borrow trouble. She would stay and enjoy herself in the comfortable country seat of the Cavendishes, and accumulate money from the liberal allowance made her by the heiress.

And if Laura Lytton and Emma Cavendish remained in ignorance of the fatal treachery that had caused the death of Charles Cavendish, she might remain as long as she pleased in her luxurious quarters, accumulating a fortune, and running also her chance of effecting an advantageous marriage.

And even if, on the other hand, Alden Lytton should have told his sister, and Laura should tell Emma the fatal secret, and the "worse" should come to the "worst," it would not be so very bad.

True, she would have to leave Blue Cliffs, but then, Blue Cliffs, comfortable, and even luxurious, as it was, was at its best but a lonely, dreary, dismal old country house, shut in on all sides by mountains and half buried in woods, having no society and affording no opportunity of flirtation.

And it would be a great deal gayer to live in some city.

Of course she would lose her allowance.

But then, she had already accumulated a considerable sum of money; her diamonds were in themselves worth a small fortune; and her rich wardrobe would last for years.

Upon the whole, she was "perplexed, yet not in despair."

She did not believe that Alden Lytton would accept the invitation to Blue Cliffs. Indeed, she felt sure that he would not, if he knew of her presence in the house, as he probably did from his sister's letters.

She dreaded to meet Dr. Jones as much or more than she dreaded to meet Laura Lytton; but she comforted herself with the reflection that Dr. Jones had promised that he would not expose her, and the hope that Laura Lytton could not.

And so the last days of Lent passed away.

In these last days of Lent, Craven Kyte became a frequent visitor at Blue Cliffs.

Old Mrs. Cavendish, who, confined as she was to her room, yet heard all the news of the neighborhood, and all the gossip of the house, through her granddaughter or her servants, became very uneasy at hearing of Mr. Kyte's frequent visits.

"What does the presuming young fellow come here for? I hope not for you, Emma," she said, one morning, to the young heiress.

Miss Cavendish laughed.

"Oh, no, grandma. He does not honor me with his attentions," she answered.

"Whom then does he 'honor,' as you call it, with his attentions? or 'affront,' as I call it, with his impertinences?" demanded the old lady, raising her gold spectacles to the top of her head and gazing at her granddaughter through her still bright blue eyes.

"He comes after Mrs. Grey, I think."

"After Mrs. Grey! After my son's young widow—I mean my son's betrothed, who came so near being his wife, and, of course, his widow! The impertinent young puppy!" said the old lady, indignantly. "I must have a talk with Mary, and tell her to send the foolish, presumptuous fellow about his business," she added, bridling.

Emma smiled and begged her grandma not to be disturbed, for that Mrs. Grey could certainly take care of herself.

And so the interview ended.

Yes, Mrs. Grey could take care of herself. She was in no sort of danger.

But as for the poor young man, Craven Kyte?

Day after day he found some excuse to drop in at Blue Cliffs. Evening after evening he spent in the flirt's fatal company.

Like the three professors at Mount Ascension, like poor young Parson Lyle, like Governor Cavendish and Alden Lytton, he, in his turn, fell a victim to the baleful beauty of Mary Grey.

Forgotten was his fair betrothed, the brave maiden of the lighthouse; forgotten were all his vows, his faith, his honor. Beloved only was the fascinating siren who was luring him on to his destruction.

One fatal evening in the last week in Lent he broke through all the barriers of reserve, and with awkward earnestness declared his passion for her, and besought her to be his wife.

And she?

Why, she laid her little white hand on his head, and wept over him and sympathized with him, and told him that her heart was buried in the grave of her—betrothed, this time; but that, if ever she could rally from her present despair so as to take any interest in the affairs of this life, she might possibly think of his proposal; and that if ever she should consent to marry any one, it should certainly be him and no other; but that he must not press her now. He must forget for the present the proposal he had made, and continue to visit her and be her friend as heretofore.

And he sighed and thanked her, and blessed her, and promised to try to school his heart to moderation and forbearance.

And still, after this he visited her every day, while she played with him as a cat plays with a mouse, gratifying her inordinate, cruel and selfish vanity with the sight of his agonies.

And this lasted until the arrival of the Easter party to break up this daily *tête-à-tête* in the drawing-room.

They came on the Saturday evening preceding Easter Sunday.

On the morning of that day Emma Cavendish, with an open letter in her hand, entered the parlor where Mary Grey sat reading, and said:

"Our visitors will be here to-night. I have a letter from Laura Lytton. She and Electra will travel under the escort of Dr. Jones. Grandma has also a letter from Alden Lytton. He declines, with thanks, her invitation to join his sister here," she added.

"Ah!" said Mary Grey. And she thought:

"He knows that I am here, and he does not care to meet me. I wonder if he has told Laura anything about me?"

Emma Cavendish, having gayly told her news, now danced out of the room, saying that she had yet some preparations to make for the reception of her visitors.

And Mary Grey sat and anxiously awaited the coming

of the evening and the arrival of the visitors that were to decide her destiny.

"Does Laura know, or does she not know?" was the question that continually repeated itself to her.

CHAPTER L

A LISTENER, AND WHAT SHE HEARD

Evening came at length, and fine fires were lighted in the long drawing-room, and in the dining-room, and in the guests' chambers, that were prepared for the visitors.

And an elegant supper service was laid in the dining-room, ready for the luxurious supper that was being prepared in the kitchen. And Emma Cavendish had sent Jerome with the capacious family traveling carriage to the Wendover station to meet the travelers and bring them to Blue Cliffs.

And Emma herself, with Mrs. Grey, sat in the parlor awaiting their arrival.

But as the hours of waiting passed heavily on, Mary Grey's courage ebbed. She dreaded to meet Laura Lytton, lest that young lady should have heard of her murderous treachery, and should, in the presence of all her companions, give her "the cut direct."

She felt that she could not risk meeting such an affront.

So when at length she heard the sound of distant carriage wheels, she arose, saying:

"I think I will leave you to receive your young friends alone, my dear Emma. Doubtless you would prefer to do so."

And she slipped out of the room before Miss Cavendish could put in any reply.

Mary Grey tripped upstairs and concealed herself in an empty closet, situated between the chamber occupied by

Emma Cavendish and the one assigned for the use of the two girls, Laura and Electra.

Here, hidden from view, she knew she should pass unsuspected, hear all that should pass between the young hostess and her guests, whether they should talk together in the one room or the other.

She had not remained long in her hiding-place before she heard the carriage roll up to the front door, the door quickly thrown open and the merry entrance of the Easter party, attended by the joyous greetings, as hostess and visitors embraced.

And soon they all came upstairs together. And soon they were all gathered in Laura and Electra's room, where, the door being closed, they thought themselves alone and secure from outside intrusion and observation. And then followed the senseless, sweet chatter of young girls meeting after absence.

And then at length Mary Grey's name was mentioned, and the listener pricked up her ears and listened more intently.

It was the voice of Emma Cavendish that she heard speaking.

"Yes, she is here still, and is to stay here always. I know, Laura, dear, that you never liked Mrs. Grey. And even I, who liked her at first, began to dislike her very much when I thought she was going to be my stepmother. And I fear I might have been unjust to her then. But, Laura, listen! My dear father loved her—loved her tenderly. And since his death, I have taken her to my heart for his sake. Why, Laura, dear, I would cherish a dog that papa had loved. And shall I not much more cherish the woman that he adored? But perhaps I should not have felt so if he had lived. But death makes a great difference, Laura, love. Now, try to like her for my sake, and for my dear father's."

"Emma, dear, I shall be very good to Mrs. Grey, since you wish it. And I shall try to believe in her also, since

I really have no substantial reasons for doubting her," answered Laura Lytton, pleasantly.

Mary Grey's heart bounded with joy. She gave a great sigh of relief.

So Laura Lytton had "no substantial reasons for doubting her"—Mary Grey. Laura had said it. Therefore it was true. And, therefore, also, Laura had never heard of that horrid scene between herself and Alden which had ended in the fatal stroke that caused the death of Charles Cavendish.

With the "sigh of a great deliverance," she arose and stole forth from the closet by the door leading through Emma Cavendish's room, which was then empty.

She hurried to her room, which was now well warmed and well lighted, and she stood before the mirror to put a few finishing touches to her toilet—for, was there not a gentleman in the Easter party? Was there not the Rev. Dr. Jones there to be fascinated? True, he was over sixty years old; true, he seemed to have detested her, and to be her enemy. But what of that? He was the only available man to flirt with for that evening, and she knew the power of her beauty to win him over; and therefore he must be victimized. So with her dress perfectly arranged, and her face all dressed in smiles, she descended to the drawing-room, where the young people were already gathered.

CHAPTER LI

THE EASTER PARTY

A SHARP glance sent around the room showed her that the Rev. Dr. Jones was not present. And a quick intuition told her truly that he was in his mother's room.

As soon as she crossed the threshold, Miss Cavendish

kindly came forward to meet her, and took her hand, saying:

"Come in, Mrs. Grey. We are waiting for you. Here is Laura and Electra, both looking so well and happy."

Reassured by these pleasant words, Mary Grey went smilingly forward and greeted the two young ladies, each with a kiss.

And she even commanded herself sufficiently well to say to Laura:

"We had hoped to have your brother here also, Miss Lytton."

"Yes, I had hoped so, too. It was so very kind and thoughtful in Mrs. Cavendish to think of asking him. Was it not?" said Laura.

"It was like her dear self," smiled Mary Grey.

"And after all he wouldn't come; said he couldn't; that he had to read hard all the holidays, to make up for lost time, and to be prepared to pass his examination in July. It is a great nuisance, is it not?"

"It is perfectly abominable!" put in Electra.

At this moment old Aunt Moll, the oldest and most esteemed female servant in the family, entered the room, and, courtesying with old-fashioned deference, said:

"Miss Emmy, honey, de ole madam 'sires for to see you in her own room, and likewise Miss Mary and the young ladies."

Miss Cavendish immediately arose, requesting her companions to accompany her, left the drawing-room, and conducted them to her grandmother's chamber.

Although it was rather later than the old lady's usual hour of retiring to rest, they found Mrs. Cavendish still sitting in her fireside easy-chair, dressed with unusual care and taste, and looking better and brighter than Emma had seen her for years.

The Rev. Dr. Jones stood near her on the rug, with his back to the fire.

"Come in, my dears. Emma, introduce your friends," said the old lady, kindly.

Miss Cavendish took Laura's hand and presented her by name.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Lytton. Your family and Emma's have been friends for centuries," said Mrs. Cavendish, offering her hand.

Laura Lytton courtesied very low, and kissed the offered hand of this ancient *grande dame,* as if it had been the hand of a queen.

But the old lady drew the young girl to her bosom and embraced her with much tenderness.

Then Emma took Electra's hand to present her.

But the old lady forestalled the action.

"No, my darling Emma. It is I who must introduce this young lady to your young friends, ay, and to herself, too, in a character in which she has not hitherto been known to any, not even to herself."

Mrs. Cavendish paused for a moment and looked from the curious and expectant faces of her young listeners to the astonished face of the girl who stood before her.

Then, taking the hand of Electra, she drew her to her bosom, and embraced her fondly, saying:

"Come to me, my dear child. This is your home forevermore."

And then releasing her, and turning her around to the others, she said:

"Young ladies, I am over eighty years of age, and have lived to see my great-granddaughter a young woman. This is she—Electra Coroni. She is the granddaughter of my good, long-absent son here, Dr. Beresford Jones."

At these words the youthful party turned their eyes on the Rev. Dr. Jones, who smiled and bowed gravely.

Electra's face grew white and red again, and she sank upon the foot-cushion at the old lady's feet, dropped her head upon her hands, burst into tears, and sobbed softly.

The old lady laid her hand upon the girl's shining hair,

and kept it there for a little while, during which no one spoke, and no sound was heard but the soft sobbing of Electra.

The announcement that had been made was totally unexpected by Laura Lytton and Mary Grey, and their faces expressed the utmost astonishment. Truly, Mary Grey had, by eavesdropping, overheard Mrs. Cavendish call Dr. Jones her son, and had thought that she had discovered a mighty family secret, which would be of use to herself some day. But this had given no clue to the secret of Electra's parentage, and thus she was as much taken by surprise as was Laura Lytton and Electra herself.

Mrs. Cavendish was the first to break the silence.

"I deemed it right, young ladies, to call you here and communicate this piece of intelligence at once, so as to put all matters upon a right base to begin with. And now, my dears, as my health is but feeble, and I need to retire early to bed, I will dismiss you to your evening amusements, with the hope that you will find your visit here as pleasant to yourselves as it is welcome to us. Good-night."

And the old lady held out her hand with a blending of friendliness and old-fashioned formality.

Emma, Laura and Mrs. Grey, in turn, took and kissed the kindly hand, and turned to leave the room.

But Electra still sat on the cushion at her grandmother's feet, with her face buried in her hands, sobbing softly, until the old lady stooped over her and whispered:

"My dear child, does it affect you so much as this to have found your family and friends?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" sobbed Electra.

"Come, try to calm yourself. Rise and go with the young companions to whose society you are accustomed. You will all have a great deal to say to each other after this. And you will recover calmness in their company sooner than anywhere else."

And with these words, the ancient dame raised her youth-

ful descendant to her feet, and, turning to her granddaughter, said:

"Come, Emma, take your cousin here away with you, and be good to her."

Miss Cavendish took Electra's hand, and said, pleasantly:

"Come, my little cousin. We have always been friends, and now I am very glad to find that we are such near relatives."

And the weeping girl, weeping for joy rather than grief, suffered herself to be led away by Emma Cavendish.

Mrs. Grey and Laura Lytton were following, when the old lady suddenly uttered a low exclamation that stopped them.

"Come here, Mrs. Grey, my dear. I beg your pardon. And yours, also, my son," she said, turning to Dr. Jones. "The absorbing interest of receiving the child Electra made me forget the common courtesy due to others. Mrs. Grey, permit me to present to you my eldest son, Dr. Beresford Jones. He has been an absentee and a traveler for many years. And his return now fills my heart with joy. My son, this is Mrs. Grey, once the dear friend and betrothed bride of your late brother. Their marriage was prevented only by his death. Receive her, therefore, as a sister."

And the old lady took the hand of Mary Grey and placed it in that of Beresford Jones.

What Dr. Jones was about to say or do, under the circumstances, I do not know; probably something rather unpleasant to the young widow; but Mary Grey, as she gave him her hand, lifted her beautiful dark eyes, her pleading, subduing eyes, to his face, and he simply released her hand, and said, gently:

"I have met this lady before."

"Ah! to be sure. At the school where you went to place Electra. She was a teacher there at the time, as I have heard," murmured Mrs. Cavendish to herself.

"Ah!" thought Mary Grey, "he was going to sneer when I was introduced to him. But I only looked at him, and he could not do it. I shall have him at my feet yet, for all his gray hairs."

"There, my children, old and young, an old lady's invalid chamber cannot be the most cheerful place in the house for you to spend your evening in. And, besides, doubtless you are tired and hungry, and your supper has been ready this half-hour past. Take them down, Emma, my dear. Good-night, my loves," said Mrs. Cavendish, sinking wearily back in her chair.

So at length they all left the room. Emma Cavendish drew Electra's hand within her arm and pressed it affectionately.

The strange girl returned the caress, but then slipped away from the side of her cousin, and went and put her hand through the arm of Dr. Jones and walked down with him.

"Grandpapa," she inquired, "why was it that you put me to school without any other name than Electra?"

"Because, my child, you must remember that I very much disliked your father's name, and would not call you by it. That dislike has only now been reasoned away by my good mother. You are Electra Coroni."

"My father was a foreigner, then?"

"An Italian dancing-master, whose acquaintance your mother formed at her boarding-school. But your mother was my daughter, a lady. Both your parents died in your early infancy, leaving you in much destitution. That accounts for your having been lost in New York, and having 'fallen among thieves,' while you were yet too young to bear your parentage in memory. I had lost trace of my unhappy daughter for many years; so that when at length I sought her, I could not find her. She had, in fact, been dead for a long time, though I did not know it then—did not know it, in fact, until accident revealed to me the fact of your existence, and gave me the clue that I followed

backward for years into the history of your mother's married life. And, Electra, let us drop the subject for the present," said Dr. Jones, as he led the young lady into the supper-room, where their companions had already preceded them.

The supper was a triumph of Aunt Moll's housekeeping and culinary skill. And the hungry travelers enjoyed it much.

And after supper they adjourned to the drawing-room, where Emma Cavendish soon found herself sitting beside Dr. Jones.

"Uncle," she said, slipping her hand in his, "I hope that you will confirm grandmamma's words to Electra."

"What words, my dear?" inquired the doctor.

"She told Electra that this was to be her 'home forevermore.' I hope it is to be, dear uncle. I have no sister. I should be so happy to have Electra always here. Shall she not stay?"

"She shall stay until after Easter week, my dear, and then she must return to school, for her education is very backward for a young lady. She shall spend all her holidays here, however, if your grandmother and yourself wish it."

"Certainly we wish it, uncle. And when she leaves school finally she shall come here to stay permanently, shall she not?"

"No, my dear. Once more I am anxious to make a home of my own. While my granddaughter is completing her education, I shall be improving and beautifying our old family mansion and estate of Beresford Manors. When she finally leaves school, I shall take her there to be the mistress of the place of which she will be the sole heiress. But, my dear, you can exchange as many and as long visits as you please."

"In that case, dear uncle, I cannot be so selfish as to urge my own earnest desire to have my cousin make her permanent home with me," said Emma, with a smile, as

she arose and went to join Laura Lytton and Electra, who were chattering away in a corner like a couple of magpies.

"I hope, dear cousin, that you feel quite at home here," said Emma, approaching her new-found relative.

"No, I don't. I feel like a cat in a strange garret," answered the girl; for she seemed quite to have recovered her cheerfulness. And truly Dr. Jones was right. Her education had been sadly neglected.

Meantime, Mrs. Grey, seeing Dr. Jones left alone, went and took her seat by his side, and with an appealing look up into his face, she said, with childlike humility:

"Oh, Dr. Jones, do not be my foe! If you——" She stopped and sobbed a little, and then recovered herself and continued: "You cannot condemn me more than I condemn myself. But I was so young, so young! And if you knew all you would not condemn me so much."

"My girl," he answered, "if I had chanced to come upon the scene before my brother's death, and had found him on the verge of marriage with you, I should certainly have interfered and prevented that misfortune by telling him precisely who and what you were. But death prevented that intended marriage. And now, as I said before, that, seeing you can do no harm to others here, and may do good to your own soul, I shall not interfere unless I see grave occasion for doing so. Therefore be circumspect."

She took his hand and kissed it, and poured the light of her soul-subduing eyes into his face, until he had to turn away from their luster.

Just how circumspect Mary Grey could be, and what the future had in store for this beautiful fiend, is told in "Victor's Triumph"—the sequel to this romance—and is published uniform with this volume.

THE END

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